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THE
BOOK OF REVELATION:

AN EXPOSITION;

BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF PROF. STUART'S COMMENTARY,
AND DESIGNED TO FAMILIARIZE THOSE PRINCIPLES
TO THE MINDS OF NON-PROFESSIONAL
READERS.

BY

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—ἄδει γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει—*Rev. 1: 1.*

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PREFACE.

THE publication of Professor Moses Stuart's Commentary on the Apocalypse in 1845 marked a new era in biblical exposition in this country, especially in the department of prophecy. Instead of the conjectural and mystical methods of deducing the meaning of the sacred books, which had long been in vogue, there was substituted what may not invidiously be styled the method of *common sense*. It was assumed that these books were given for a practical purpose, some important end of instruction, of admonition, or comfort, to those to whom they were addressed ; that they were therefore designed to be understood by them, and in fact were understood in their essential import; and still further, that by the application of the well-known canons of interpretation which are our guide to the meaning of all language in every field of literature, we may understand them also.

Studied in the light of these principles, the Book of Revelation took on an almost totally new aspect. To many minds it was nearly equivalent to adding a new book to the Bible. That which had seemed fanciful, grotesque, and utterly inexplicable, lost its strange aspect and became an intelligible and rational book, for the practical use of the church. Not a few wild schemes of anticipation as to the overthrow of Mohammedanism and the Papacy, the literal end of the world, and the like,

were shown to have no solid warrant in the word of God. Instead of adding to the difficulties of Inspiration, as a teacher of mankind in the things of life and godliness, it was seen to be a true helper to the church in one of the great exigencies of its history, "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

In the preparation of this little book, the main portions of which first appeared in the columns of the *Christian Mirror*, the object of the writer has been to aid ordinary readers in attaining those more rational, and, as is believed, more truthful views of this part of the Sacred Word. Many who saw them in those columns have expressed a desire to have them in a more permanent form, and at the risk of censure for presuming to understand this so-called mysterious book, I venture to issue them anew.

It should be added that while in the main following the exposition of Prof. Stuart, I have on some points taken the liberty of differing from it. I have also carried further than he did his own principles in reference to what he somewhat inconsistently denominated the *remote* future. The reader will judge whether the reasons for this, as given *in loco*, warrant me in so doing.

PORTLAND, ME., Dec. 1, 1885.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION.

	PAGE
I. Popular impressions.....	9
II. The Key to the Book.....	14
“Things which must shortly come to pass”.....	15
Meaning of “shortly”.....	15
1. No warrant for evading this meaning.....	17
2. 2 Peter iii. 3 not contrary to it.....	18
3. Prophecy always fulfilled in its exact periods	18
4. The time declared to be at hand.....	19
5. The times meant in the seven epistles near..	20
6. Chaps. vi.-xi. coincident with Matt. xxiv., xxv.	20
7. Chap. xvii. 10 fixes the time.....	21
III. Occasion and Intent of the Book.....	22
IV. Peculiarities of Manner and Style.....	30
1. Its meaning intended to be concealed from enemies.....	31
2. Its meaning intended to be known by Christians.....	38
(1) Its drapery derived from the Old Test.	38
(2) Its allusions to events in Jewish history	40
(3) Its imagery derived from Jewish prophecy.....	42
(4) Its use of the Gematria.....	43
(5) Its author lived to an advanced age....	44
3. How the latter did understand it.....	44
(1) That it referred to their persecutors...	45
(2) That the churches were to be victorious	47
(3) That they should have special rewards	49

THE REVELATION.

I.

PREFATORY.

The Title-Page.....	57
The Dedication.....	58

	PAGE
Motto.....	59
The Divine Titles.....	60
Vision of Christ the Revealer.....	60

II.

MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

Ephesus.....	67
Smyrna.....	68
Pergamum.....	69
Thyatira.....	70
Sardis.....	72
Philadelphia.....	73
Laodicea.....	74

III.

THE FIRST PROPHETIC BOOK.

The Heavenly Session.....	78
The Book of the Future.....	86
The Slain Lamb.....	90
The Song of Redemption.....	91
The Opening of the Seals.....	94
The First Seal.....	96
The Second Seal.....	96
The Third Seal.....	97
The Fourth Seal.....	98
The Fifth Seal.....	99
The Sixth Seal.....	103
The First Trumpet.....	107
The Sealing of Believers.....	107
The Song of Deliverance.....	113
The Seventh Seal.....	115
The First Trumpet.....	117
The Second Trumpet.....	118
The Third Trumpet.....	119
The Fourth Trumpet.....	120
The Woe Trumpets.....	121
The Fifth Trumpet.....	121
The Sixth Trumpet.....	128
The Angel of the Second Book.....	133
The Measurement of the Temple.....	140
The Two Witnesses.....	146
Completion of the Sixth Trumpet.....	154
The Seventh Trumpet.....	156

IV.

THE SECOND PROPHETIC BOOK.

	PAGE
The Woman and the Dragon.....	163
The Conflict in Heaven.....	166
The Dragon's Wrath.....	168
The Two Beasts.....	169
The Beast from the Sea.....	170
The Beast from the Land.....	177
The Name of the Beast.....	181
Encouragements.....	184
1. The Faithful of the Former Persecution.....	186
2. The Spread of the Gospel.....	189
3. The Fall of their Persecutor.....	189
4. The Fate of Apostates.....	190
5. The Reward of Martyrs.....	191
6. The Harvest of the Earth.....	192
7. The Vintage of the Earth.....	193
The Seven Last Plagues.....	195
An Anticipatory Triumphal Song.....	196
Preparation.....	197
The First Vial.....	198
The Second Vial.....	199
The Third Vial.....	199
The Fourth Vial.....	200
The Fifth Vial.....	200
The Sixth Vial.....	201
The Seventh Vial.....	204
The Punishment of the City.....	204
Explanatory.....	206
1. The Angel's Offer.....	207
2. The Scarlet Beast and its Rider.....	209
3. The Angel's Explanation.....	210
The Fall of Babylon.....	213
The First Herald.....	214
The Second Herald.....	215
The Third Herald.....	218
Response from the Saints.....	219
Response from the Elders and Living Ones.....	220
Universal Triumphal Song.....	220
Proclamation of the Marriage Supper	222

	PAGE
Destruction of the Armies of the Beast.....	224
The Leader of the Christian Armies.....	226
The Battle of Armageddon.....	228
Constantine the Great.....	230
The Binding of Satan.....	239
The Reign of the Martyrs.....	245
1. Who they were.....	246
2. The Duration of their Reign	247
3. The Nature of their Reign.....	248
Gog and Magog. The Ottoman Empire.....	252
1. The Founding of that Empire.....	253
2. Why named Gog and Magog.....	255
3. Their wide-spread territories.....	256
4. Their number as the sand of the sea.....	256
5. Their possession of Palestine.....	256
6. Their capture of the beloved city.....	257
7. Their destruction by fire.....	257
The Judgment of the Dead.....	258
Not the judgment of the living.....	260
The connections of the passage.....	261
They are "the rest of the dead," i.e., persecutors.	262
Similar to the judgment in Daniel.....	263
Notes on the phraseology.....	265
The New Heavens and the New Earth.....	268
The New Jerusalem.....	275

V.

THE CONCLUSION.

INTRODUCTION.

I. POPULAR IMPRESSIONS.

THERE is one book of the Scriptures in regard to which the attitude of the popular mind is, to say the least, peculiar. It is the Book of REVELATION. Nine persons out of every ten would probably give it as their first impression that the book is unintelligible. Very many would add the belief that, being for the most part prophecy, it was *designed* to be unintelligible until its meaning should be disclosed by its fulfillment. Hence the inference that, with some exceptions, it is not a profitable book for study, indeed, that for all practical uses it might as well be excluded from the volume of the Scriptures. Not a few even go further than this, and admit a certain sort of prejudice against it as a prolific source of wild speculations hostile to truth, and destructive of the peace and unity of the church.

Such impressions as these, however natural in view of the way in which this book has been used, cannot be deemed correct when held of that which is truly the Word of God. For, in the na-

ture of the case, that Word was given for the instruction of men. It is necessarily implied that it can be understood by them, and if so, that it is their duty to read and understand it. For, surely, it cannot be supposed that the Holy Spirit would occupy himself in inditing words without meaning—as they are if unintelligible—or without practical utility for the edification of his people. Much less can this be supposed of a work which, by eminence, he was pleased to style a “Revelation,” given to Christ by the Father expressly to show unto his servants certain things, to which was prefixed a special blessing on him that should read and them that should hear and keep its sayings (Chap. i. 3), and affixed a special curse upon whosoever should add to, or take away from, its words. Chap. xxii. 18, 19. These are, so to speak, signet marks of the estimation in which its Divine Author held this book, not vouchsafed to any other, and which urge it with special emphasis upon the attention and reverent faith of all readers.

The origin of these impressions, as of the great difficulties attending any confident interpretation, is to be found primarily in the peculiar method of composition employed in this book. It is essentially a *book of pictures*. Ordinary history is for the most part plain narrative. Epistles are in the varied diction of personal address, colloquial, hor-

tatory, and didactic. Psalms and prophecies are generally poetry, with the artificial adornments of rhythm, parallelism, alliteration, etc. The Revelation is in a method different from all of these. Perhaps the nearest approach to it is in the parables of Christ. These are word-pictures. A story is told, and the lesson is gathered from it as a whole. In this book a *scene* is shown to the eye of the apostle, and the meaning is to be derived from it. He does indeed use words in writing it out, but the import is not to be found in the words, but in the picture as a whole. They are, so to speak, the *paints* employed, and their use is exhausted in making up the scene. Just as in standing before some masterpiece of art, as Rubens' "Descent from the Cross," we do not ask what each color means in itself—the carmine, the ochre, the ultra-marine, etc.,—but what the *picture* which these make up means. The Revelation is a succession of such pictures. Every one of its scenes might be put upon canvas; indeed, we once saw such a series in crayon, sketched with marvelous effect by the late eminent artist, Hammatt Billings. They are to be read very much as we read the story delineated in Cole's "Voyage of Life," or Hogarth's "Rake's Progress." One scene follows another in regular order, each taking up the thought of the preceding

and carrying it on to the completion ; the whole constituting a record of the most impressive character.

In order to gather the intended meaning of such a series of pictorial writings, it is evident that we must have *the key*. It is not enough that we can read the words. It is not enough that we can put them together according to grammatical rules, so as to make sense. Nay, a fruitful imagination may be able to group them in seemingly fitting ways, so as to suggest many different things. One might, without knowing the artist's design, so read the Voyage of Life. He might devise a meaning for the child in his boat, for the star-crowned angel attending him, for the sparkling waters of the river, the flowers on its sunny banks, the shadowy palace of enchantment in the sky above him, and so on through all the delineations of the four great paintings. But he could not be sure that this was the right meaning, —that is, the artist's meaning, —unless he had *the artist's key*. Another in like ignorance might read them in a different way, and display great ingenuity therein, perhaps develop a meaning of much beauty and value, still the same doubt would remain. In other words, *guess-work* is not sufficient as a guide to the interpretation. A fertile imagination is not sufficient. Coincidences in

event, time, person, manner, or what not, are no certain proof that the author's thought is attained. The one thing indispensable is the author's *key*.

With this, the kind of writing presented us in the Revelation becomes as easy and as sure of interpretation as narrative itself. Standing before Cole's paintings, you read the inscription placed there by the artist, "*The Voyage of Life*." In a moment the series becomes luminous with the suggestive meaning. Childhood, youth, manhood, old age, speak from the glowing canvas in almost audible words. It may require a little study to discern the uses of particular objects, the rock here, the dark cloud there, the sad face of the angel far off in the distance, etc. And yet keeping in mind *the key*, and studying all with reference to it, and harmoniously with it, you cannot get far wrong. And every new discovery you make will, by the very effort it has required of you, add to the impressiveness of the pictures. You will stand before them with profound emotion; you will drink in their solemn lessons; you will be taught and admonished and incited to a degree and with a permanence of effect which no mere words, however skilfully uttered, could have wrought.

So, we venture to believe, with this Book of Revelation. It is a great picture-gallery, hung with scenes inspired by a Divine Artist, but

sketched in word-colors by the apostle in Patmos for the instruction of the church. Thus conceived of, it should seem to us one of the most attractive portions of the sacred Word. We ought to expect in it meanings most significant, most impressive, most useful. As it is the last, it should be to us the crown of all that blessed Word given to make us "wise unto salvation." If in point of fact it be not such to us, it must be because we have missed the key to it. If commentators and theorists have made it such a waste of conflicting interpretations, have speculated and refined and forced its words to every sort of arbitrary and fantastic use, it is because they have not sought, or have failed to find and use, that key. Traditional theories as to its meaning, or preconceived ideas of what it ought to mean, have been applied to it with the result of reaching almost as many conclusions as writers, all different from each other, none of them to be relied on as the undoubted truth.

What, then, is the key?

II. THE KEY.

IF a book we had never before seen, and of whose contents we were ignorant, were placed in our hands, we should turn at once to the *title-page* to ascertain its subject. If we found that subject distinctly stated there, we should deem it

conclusive as to the import of the book. We should not regard ourselves at liberty to assume that it was designed to refer to something else without clear and positive evidence to that effect. If, for instance, the title-page declared it to be a history of the American Revolution, we should not think it reasonable to expect in it the history of the late Rebellion, or the life of Napoleon III. The language of the title-page we should inevitably regard as *the key to the book*.

Now the title-page of the Book of Revelation gives us such a key. We marvel that it should ever have been misapprehended: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants

THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS."

The word *shortly* is in the original ἐν τάχει — "in a short" (time understood). It occurs also in Luke xviii. 8; Acts xii. 7; xxii. 18; xxv. 4; Rom. xvi. 20; Rev. xxii. 6. The corresponding adverbs and adjectives occur some thirty-three times more, and always with the same meaning. They signify that the events to which they apply are *near in time*. They are translated in the various places, quickly, shortly, soon, hastily, suddenly, speedily, swift. In Mark ix. 39, it is lightly. In Acts xvii. 15, with all speed.

This phrase, then, unless we do absolute vio-

lence to it, must determine the subject matter of the book so far as time is concerned. The word is not, indeed, precisely limited, and yet its import is clear. It must refer to such things as in ordinary speech would be pronounced near at hand. A few years, or on the scale with which we measure the affairs of nations, two or three centuries, at most, are all that can be reasonably claimed for it. To make it cover several thousand years, or, much more, the far reaching ages of the future, wrests its fair meaning as much as the endeavor to make a decade signify a millennium.

That this is the proper meaning of the phrase, according to grammar and lexicon, is conceded by all commentators. Had they not formed preconceived theories of what the book must refer to, they would never have thought of questioning it. When the angel commanded Peter in the prison, "Arise up *quickly*" (Acts xii. 7), or when Paul was directed in a trance to "get *quickly* out of Jerusalem" (Acts xxii. 18), can there be any doubt as to what time was intended? We ask the reader to look at all the passages above mentioned, and see if there be anything doubtful as to this point. How is it, then, that various writers stretch its import so as to make it cover all the centuries from the apostle's day to the present, nay, to embrace the yet far distant future to the end of time?

Swedenborg regards it as meaning *certainly*, a sense derived from it only by some roundabout inference. "The Apocalypse," says he, "was given in the first century, and seventeen centuries have now passed away; from which it is manifest that by 'shortly' is signified that which corresponds, which is *certainly*."

Lange makes it, "in swift succession," implying that the events referred to will follow each other rapidly. It is safe to say that such an interpretation is supported by no other place in the New Testament.

But by far the most common way of evading the simple meaning is to affirm that God uses the words, not in the human, but in a *divine* sense. Alford calls them "a prophetic formula common with Him to whom a thousand years are as one day, and used in order to teach us how short our time and the time of this world is." Bloomfield: "Measured by the language of Scripture, wherein a thousand years are as one day, they may denote anything of by no means speedy fulfillment."

In regard to this way of treating such expressions of time, I beg leave to say:

1. There is no *warrant* for it. The Scriptures nowhere authorize it; they give no example of a resort to it. It is purely a human contrivance, devised apparently under the stress of some the-

ory for the purpose of making the text cover periods of duration which else would be forbidden.

2. The passage relied on for its justification (2 Pet. iii. 8), teaches *nothing of the sort*. Peter said there were scoffers who derided the promise of Christ's coming (Parousia) because no sign of it had yet appeared. The apostle's reply is that delay does not disprove the certainty of that event. An eternal being has time enough to work in, and does not need to be in haste. With him "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." On the scale of eternity both are alike points. The reason of God's delay is not in himself or in his purposes; he waits *for man's sake*, because he is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Surely that is not saying that he disregards all distinctions of time, and when he speaks in human words, he does not mean to be understood according to the known sense of those words.

3. On the contrary, we find that prophecy, when given in exact periods of time, is *always fulfilled in those exact periods*. In Gen. vi. 3, God told Noah that the days of men before the flood came upon them should be one hundred and twenty years; did he not mean so many human years? In Gen. vii. 4, he said it should rain forty days and nights; did he mean forty thou-

sand years? In Gen. xv. 13, it was predicted that the posterity of Abraham should be bondmen in Egypt four hundred and thirty years. In Gen. xl. 1, seven years of plenty and seven of famine are foretold. In Numbers xiv. 33, that Israel should wander in the desert forty years. In Jonah iii. 4, that Nineveh should be overthrown in forty days. In Jer. xxv. 11, xxix. 10, that Judah should go into captivity seventy years. In Dan. ix. 24, that Messiah should appear in seventy "sevens," i.e., four hundred and ninety years. Now apply in these cases the above assertion that one day is equivalent to a thousand years, and what absurdities would be apparent? Apply it to the Saviour's promise to rise on the third day from the grave, and how would it nullify the most precious hopes of our salvation. What right, then, has any man,—and I ask it with some sense of abuse of God's word,—to play a similar sophistry upon the "shortly" of Rev. i. 1, and make it mean what it cannot mean?

But there are other considerations which go to confirm the simple meaning of this phrase. A lock has commonly many wards, and the key that is to open it will have corresponding peculiarities of form in order to fit it. Many such correspondences are found in this book.

4. In Chapter i. 3, a special blessing is pronounced on him that reads and them that hear

the words of this prophecy, "*for the time is at hand*," i.e., evidently, the time of its fulfilment. So in Chapter xxii. 10, the writer is forbidden to seal up the scroll, "*for the time is at hand*." Compare this with Dan. viii. 26, where the prophet was commanded to shut up the vision, for it was "for many days," i.e., the time of fulfilment was distant; hence the roll might be sealed up, and laid aside for the present.

5. The prefatory messages addressed to the seven churches had respect to the *existing* state of those churches, and what they should experience *in the near future*. This is too obvious to need proof. Indeed, we are not aware that it is ever denied by any except those who hold to the fantastic conceit that the seven churches, instead of meaning the actual historic churches in the cities named, are typical designations of seven *successive stages* in the church universal, which are imagined to have characteristics resembling those here described. Yet the same expression is repeatedly used in regard to them (Ch. ii. 5, 16; iii. 11, 20), and the threatening is acknowledged to have been executed in each case within a few score years of the time the prophecy was uttered.

6. There is ample reason to understand Chapters vi.-xi., as parallel in their import to Matt. xxiv. and xxv., and as referring to the destruction of the temple and city and nation of the Jews at

Jerusalem. The particular proof of this theory may be adduced hereafter. If it be true, it harmonizes entirely with the meaning we claim for the expression before us. If the Revelation was written by John in the persecution under Nero, about A.D. 68, that part of the fulfillment occurred two years afterward, in A.D. 70.

7. In Chapter xvii. 10 there is a formal explanation by the angel of the meaning of the vision of the Woman upon the scarlet-colored beast. The woman represents (verse 18) the city of Rome. She has had five kings, and one is; that is, she is at present under the reign of the sixth. Now the Roman emperors were, in order, Julius Cæsar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, NERO. This, to my mind, is conclusive as to the time when the book was written, and to what, in this part of it, it relates to, viz., the overthrow and destruction of the persecuting imperial power of Rome. This, too, we know, took place "quickly," i.e., within a few years from the time referred to. Nero himself perished that very year, and in less than two and a half centuries the imperial power itself was wrested from pagan hands, and in the person of Constantine became Christian.

Thus, tested in every way, by the natural force of the language, by the unvarying usage of prophecy, and by the light shed upon it from history, we have the most certain assurance of having

found in the opening sentence of this book the true *key* to its meaning. It is not a book of inexplicable mystery; it is not something reaching over the whole range of the world's history, but it is, as its own title page declares it to be, a *revelation*, a making known to the afflicted church of God those things in his gracious and loving purposes which were then *about to come to pass*.

III. OCCASION AND INTENT.

IN order to appreciate fully the contents of a book, it is important to know in what circumstances and for what purpose it was written. How much of the charm of the Pilgrim's Progress would be lost if we had never heard of Bunyan in prison. How many of its characters and conversations would be shorn of their peculiar significance if we knew nothing of the state of society and of religion in England in the 17th century. The same thing holds specially true of the books of the Bible. Every one of them, so far as we know, was written with reference to some particular use of the time. History, song, prophecy, genealogy, parable, and epistle, had some immediate end in view. There are no *general* treatises, professedly composed for the instruction of mankind at large and in every age. All analogy, therefore, teaches us that if we would understand the scope and the language of

this Book of the Revelation, we should fix in mind when and why it was given. To assume, as is so often done, that it is a book of general prophetic history, called for by no *present* need, and adapted to no special *present* use of the churches, is to suppose that true of this book which is not true of any other in the sacred volume.

We have called attention to the *key* to the meaning of the Revelation given in its title-page, viz., that it was designed to show *what must shortly come to pass*. Let us see what, as disclosed by history, *did* shortly come to pass.

When the book was written, both its author and the churches whom he addressed were suffering severe *persecution*. This was equally true, whether we regard it as written in the time of Nero, about A.D. 68, or of Domitian, A.D. 96. We shall assume, for reasons that will be apparent hereafter, that it was at the former date. Now it is known to every reader that during the whole period of nearly forty years after the death of Christ to that time, the one great foe to Christianity had been Judaism. It was Jewish malice that instigated the crucifixion of our Lord, the imprisonments and scourgings of the apostles, the stoning of Stephen, the threatenings and slaughter by Saul, the murder of James, and those incessant outbreaks of violence against the believers recorded in the Acts. In Judea, in Asia Minor,

in Macedonia and Greece and Rome, the story was the same. It was Jews that withstood the preaching of the apostles, that entered malicious complaints against them to the authorities, that hired false witnesses, that stirred up mobs, that laid plots to assassinate them. Literally and fearfully had they, as our Lord bade them, filled up the measure of their fathers. They had become ripe for destruction, and the dire denunciations of Christ against them, their city and nation, were just about to be executed. If this book was written in A.D. 68, two years only remained before those denunciations, which were but the summing up of all that had been threatened by all the prophets from Moses down, would be fulfilled. Only two years more would the churches need to bear up under this incessant enmity; two years only of divine forbearance might they enjoy who had been more merciless than the wild beasts towards their countrymen, believers in the Messiah they had rejected.

This retributive chastisement took place as had been predicted. The devastation of Judea by fire and sword, and the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies, have stood for eighteen centuries on the page of history as the most fearful in the annals of human woe. Famine, pestilence, and war, in a few short months, destroyed not less than two millions of lives, and

erased from the earth what was perhaps the richest and most splendid city in the world. Josephus, who was himself a Jew in the service of Rome, has left us an account of the whole tragedy, as he knew it as an eye-witness, which no one, even at this day, can peruse without a shudder. We ask any of our readers who possess a copy of his works, or can gain access to them, to read the fifth and sixth books of his "Jewish War," as the best possible commentary on our Saviour's predictions in Matt. xxiv., and the most instructive preparation for the study of the similar predictions contained in this Book of Revelation.

But the Jews were not the only persecutors of the primitive church. In that bloody work they were far outdone by the pagan emperors of Rome. John himself was at this time in exile at Patmos, under the decree of the reigning emperor. Chapter i. 9. In general, it had been the policy of Rome, as the mistress of many nations with different customs and religions, to be tolerant of all, provided obedience was rendered to the imperial government. Whenever a people submitted to the Roman arms, their gods were adopted by the senate into the Pantheon, and their worship declared a *religio licita*, i.e., a *lawful* religion. Such had been the case with Judaism, and for a considerable time the Christians, being regarded

merely as a Jewish sect, shared in the protection accorded to the mother faith. It was due to the personal malice of that most execrable of the Roman emperors, Nero, that this ancient policy of toleration was abandoned. In the year A.D. 64, that monarch, in one of his insane freaks of tyranny, set fire to his capital, and for three days amused himself in witnessing the progress of the conflagration, a catastrophe in which two-thirds of the city was destroyed. This wanton outrage excited such an odium and raised so many murmurs that Nero was alarmed, and looked around to find some objects on which he might fasten the crime, and transfer the popular indignation from himself. These he found in the Christians, who were becoming quite numerous in Rome, and who, not having received distinct recognition in law, might be assailed with impunity. Charging upon them the commission of the crime, he instigated a merciless persecution against them. He caused them to be put to death by the sword and by crucifixion; to be thrown to wild beasts; to be sewn up in sacks and worried to death by savage dogs; and even to be smeared with pitch and set on fire as torches, to give light in the imperial gardens. This terrible persecution continued with unabated fury four years, until Nero himself perished in a revolt, dying by his own hand with the aid of one of his slaves. This persecu-

tion was followed by others, under successive emperors, for about two hundred and forty-two years. In that period there were forty sovereigns in all, some reigning but a few months. As a whole, with a few exceptions, they were despots, selfish, licentious, and cruel. Being by their office heads of the pagan religion, — supreme pontiffs as well as emperors, — they were readily incited by the priesthood, and the numerous classes of artificers, tradesmen, courtesans, and courtiers, who were interested in maintaining the pagan worship, to regard the Christians as enemies of the public institutions, and especially of the gods of Rome, and to punish them accordingly. Historians have commonly reckoned *ten* of these periods of persecution in that space of two and a half centuries. It is perhaps more exactly true that while there were about that number of special outbreaks of violence, the entire period was one of oppression and suffering for the churches. The laws nearly always were violent against them, and throughout the empire they were at all times subject to the malignity, the greed, and the fanaticism of the rulers. Vast numbers suffered confiscation and banishment, and almost as many perished by fire and sword and wild beasts. The catacombs of Rome, which were both burial places of the dead and hiding places for the living, remain to this day as im-

pressive witnesses of what in the inscrutable wisdom of Providence was to be the direful experience of the church in those martyr ages.

Such, then, were the things which, when the apostle was commanded to write the Revelation, were *shortly to come to pass*. Persecution then raging, and persecution lying before the church along a bloody track of two hundred and forty years — almost as long as from the landing of the Pilgrims to this hour — was what God's people had to look forward to, and prepare themselves for. Surely it was an occasion worthy to be made the theme of a *new book* of divine counsels. The churches needed to be warned of what was coming, and strengthened to meet it. First of all, they needed to know that their persecutors should finally be overthrown. Apostate Jerusalem and idolatrous Rome had arrayed themselves against the Lord they loved; they should know that the Lord had arrayed himself against them. Next, they should be assured that those who stood fast in their faith, even unto death, should have a glorious reward in heaven, while those who apostatized from the truth should have an enhanced retribution of woe. With all these should be mingled whatever would encourage and confirm them, glorious visions of the Saviour they served, of the heaven to which they were going, of the martyrs on their thrones of glory,

of the loving sympathy and help of mighty angels, and to crown all, of the church herself in her perfected glory, a radiant city a thousand-fold more resplendent than the Jerusalem of earth, — arrayed in the white bridal robes of holiness, and married in everlasting love to the Lamb. Correspondent with all these should be other visions, — veiled for prudence' sake within a thin garb of mystery, — of the characters and doom of their persecutors; the crafty old serpent, cruel and bloody beasts, the encrimsoned harlot, symbol of pagan impurity, all after brief periods of triumph baffled, cast down, destroyed by the avenging wrath of heaven. Thus by marvelous visions, by solemn warnings and glorious promises, was the church to be made ready for her career of trial. Thus did the Saviour throw his arms around his people in advance of their sufferings, and draw them by kindly warning and sympathy and promise to the shelter of his loving bosom.

We have said that a state of things like this was an occasion worthy of a new book of inspiration. Among all the books of the sacred volume then existing, there was none that was fully sufficient for so great a want. There were books of history and worship, and now fulfilled prophecies relating to Israel and Judah, and there were the Gospels and Epistles, but there was no **BOOK OF PERSECUTION**. Jeremiah and Ezekiel had

foretold the ruin of the oppressive monarchies of Assyria and Babylon, and Daniel had portrayed with graphic power the destruction of Epiphanes, the persecuting tyrant of Syria. But valuable as these might be, they were not enough for the instruction and comfort of the church under a double persecution a hundred-fold worse than all God's ancient people ever suffered. A new emergency like this, then, one which would be a very crisis of life or death to the church, demanded a new provision of instruction to meet it. So momentous in its disclosures of what was to be, so impressive in its warnings, so inspiring in its promises, so lofty in its delineations of the glory and safety and eternal blessedness of God's faithful saints, it was worthy of the name by which it was designated, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, WHICH GOD GAVE TO HIM TO SHOW UNTO HIS SERVANTS THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS.

IV. PECULIARITIES OF MANNER AND STYLE.

IF we have found in the declared scope of this book a key to its contents, and the purpose for which it was written, we may find also a clue to its peculiarities of composition, so unlike those of the other books of the New Testament.

The "things" of special importance to the infant churches, which at that time were "shortly

to come to pass," were comprehended in that *persecution* which, having already broken out under Nero, was destined to extend over a period of two and a half centuries, till the time of Constantine the Great. I have stated the reasons for believing that the object of this book was to comfort and strengthen the churches under this persecution, by predicting the destruction of their persecutors, the ultimate triumph of Christianity over all its foes, and the blessed rewards that would be conferred on the martyrs who should remain faithful unto death.

With such a purpose in view, it is obvious, in considering the circumstances of the case, that two things were indispensable in its manner of composition, viz., *concealment* of its meaning from the enemies of the church, and a *disclosure* of that meaning to it and its friends.

1. It must be written in such a way that its meaning would be *concealed from the persecuting powers*. To have written out in clear and express terms a paper of such a purport as we believe this to be, would have been an act of undoubted treason against the imperial government of Rome. To have predicted the overthrow of its emperors, the defeat of their plans, the downfall of the state religion and its splendid array of temples, priests, and rites, and the conquest by the hated sect of Nazarenes of the imperial

throne and of the world, would have been taken as an insult to Roman authority and Roman pride, which could be expiated only by death. To have had in possession such a document, much more, to have read it in the public assemblies, and to be known as making it the ground of their common expectations and hopes, would have made the entire Christian body criminal. The highest offense known to Roman law was the *crimen læsæ majestatis* — the crime of wounded majesty. None was pursued with such relentless fury ; none punished with such pitiless severity.

Nor could there have been any successful concealment of such a book. In those degenerate days of the empire, no trade was pursued more industriously than that of *informer* (*delator*). Emissaries and spies of the tyrants thronged every province and every city, ready to report whatever could be construed into an offense against the emperor, and bring a reward for the informer. False brethren and apostates would have been found, who, for gain or personal safety would have betrayed a secret of such magnitude as this. In a word, the bare statement of the case shows that if such a document as we have supposed was to be written at all, it must be in such a way as to be unintelligible to those whose ruin it predicted. Suppose, during our late rebellion, a well-formed plan had been laid to res-

cue our suffering soldiers from Libby Prison, and a message was to be sent them announcing that purpose, to strengthen their fortitude and secure their co-operation in its execution, how obvious is it that that communication must have been concealed from the enemy — written in cypher, or by some other device made unintelligible, if it should fall into their hands.

Hence, chiefly, as I regard it, the use of symbols and enigmatic utterances in this Book of Revelation. We shall see presently something of the nature and sources of these, and how remote both were from the knowledge of the pagan Romans of that day. In their pride of metropolitan culture and position, the Romans looked down with contempt on what they regarded the unintelligible superstitions of the thousand sects which filled the empire. It would, then, be nothing surprising nor improper if that contempt should be taken advantage of to be made a screen for so dangerous a book as this. Let it be shaped in enigmatic forms; let it make use of cabalistic names and numbers; of sealed scrolls, now to be opened and read, now to be eaten; let it be full of visions of impossible beasts and locusts and serpents, of dark shapes from Tartarus, and of bright celestials coming like Homer's gods from heaven to execute incomprehensible errands; of dirges over dead cities, and peans of victory over

phantom foes,—and it might well be assured that even treason itself would be safe in such a garb as this. Nay, there might be uses of such a method for the church herself, in withholding from those of her own members, who for want of spiritual perception or discretion were not fit to be trusted, so important secrets as these. There were in all ancient religions *mysteries*, which were fully known only to the initiated—the innermost truths or rites of their faith—which were prudentially withheld from those not qualified to know them. So Christ, because of their lack of spiritual capacity, taught the people only in parables, and Paul fed his spiritual children with milk and not with meat, because they were not able to bear it.

Such, then, as it appears to me, were, substantially, the reasons why this Book of Revelation was written in the manner it was,—one which from its example is frequently denominated the “Apocalyptic style.” And such, too, I take the occasion to remark, are the only reasons I can conceive of why *prophecy* in the Scriptures is ever written enigmatically. It is a quite common saying of writers that prophecy is not, as a rule, to be understood until its meaning is disclosed by the fulfillment. If by that remark were intended only that its fulfillment is wont to show us vastly *more* than we could gather from the terms of the

prophecy, we should readily assent. But to say that we cannot know it at all—even the subject matter to which it relates—until it is fulfilled, is to our mind entirely unreasonable. If we cannot understand the prophecy, we can never know whether it is fulfilled or not. If the promise of a coming Saviour had been uttered in an unknown tongue—the tongue of angels and not of men—the world could never have told whether Jesus of Nazareth were he or not. We must be able to read the figures on a baggage check in order to tell whether its corresponding check tallies with it or not.

I appeal for the confirmation of this view to the whole course of ancient prophecy. Often, indeed,—especially in the primitive ages of the world,—predictions were very faintly given, just a few rays of the dawning light, and not the full-orbed sun. Such were the first prophecies of a coming Saviour to Eve, to Abraham, to Jacob, and even to David. Yet in all these instances the prophecy was designed to be *understood as far as it went*. There is no reason to doubt that Jacob understood his prediction of the coming of Shiloh, as truly as Isaiah that of his fifty-third chapter. It did not tell him or the world *as much*, but *what* it said was intelligible, and given for the instruction of God's people. So the prediction of a flood,—could not the old world un-

derstand it before the day that Noah entered into the ark? God's messages to Pharaoh by Moses — was their import purposely concealed from the monarch? Take the wonderful predictions of blessing and cursing given in Deuteronomy to the people, as their future conduct should be, were they all unmeaning? So, through the books of the later prophets, with a single exception in that of Daniel, where is the evidence of a designed concealment of their import? On the contrary, was it not the habitual reproach of God to his wayward people, not that they had not understood his words, but that they had not obeyed them? “Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants, *the prophets*, daily rising up early and sending them, yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck; they did worse than their fathers. Therefore, thou shalt speak all these words unto them, but they will not hearken unto thee; thou shalt also call unto them, but they will not answer thee.” Jer. vii. 25–27. And how severely did our Lord himself denounce the Pharisees for their *willful* ignorance. “Had ye *believed* — not, understood — Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me.” John v. 46. And even to his own disciples, when he sat at table with them in Emmaus, “O fools, and

slow of heart to *believe* all that the prophets have spoken ! ”

I have mentioned a single exception in the Book of Daniel. Here, in two instances, the prophecies given were ordered not to be promulgated till at or near the time of their fulfillment. Chapter viii. 26; xii. 4. But even in these cases, it was not because they were not intelligible. In both, the series of visions were carefully and minutely *explained*, so that they might be understood, and then both prophecy and explanation were ordered to be sealed up, because the time was “for many days.” It is true that Daniel says of one (Chapter viii. 27) that none understood it; but he clearly means that *beyond* the angelic interpretations there were unrevealed things which it was given to none then to know.*

We have then, as it seems to us, a rational clew to the design of the peculiar manner of the Revelation. The book was not intended for the use of the enemies of the church, just as the pillar of fire and cloud was not intended to be a guide and defense to the pursuing oppressors of the Hebrews. That pillar was for the protection of God’s people, and in like manner the mysterious symbolism of the Revelation was for the protection of the church. While it was impenetrable

* See Prof. Stuart on this subject, in his “Hints on Prophecy,” pp. 47-63.

to its enemies, it was at the same time a light and a guide to the imperiled saints.

2. We have seen how the first of these purposes was accomplished; let us now inquire concerning the second. In other words, what means had the early Christians, for whom the Revelation was first written, of penetrating its meaning?

(1) Its drapery and scenery were to a very large extent derived from *the sacred institutions of the Jews*, which, while little known to the pagan world, were entirely familiar to the Christians. For a while, all the disciples were converted Jews. Peter first opened the door for the admission of Gentiles when he baptized the centurion Cornelius, and his household. We do not know the exact proportions of Hebrew and Gentile converts in the churches at the time this book was written, but nearly everywhere there were enough of the former to give a coloring to Christian ideas. Besides, it was the custom in all churches, Jewish and Gentile alike, to read the Old Testament in public worship, and listen to its exposition, while its inspired songs and psalms were, as now, made the vehicle of praise. Thus the Mosaic institutions, in every part, became entirely familiar to all Christians, and all allusions to their rites, doctrines, sacred persons, places, and instrumentalities, would be apprehended at once.

Now we find that the apostle availed himself of this source very largely, in selecting the costume and phraseology of his descriptions. He begins by mentioning an *angel*, as the medium through which he received the revelation — a term which to a Roman or Greek would signify any human messenger, but which a Jew would recognize as a superhuman spirit sent from heaven. When the vision opens, he beholds a glorious Personage clothed in priestly vestments, standing before a golden, seven-branched *candlestick*. How instantly, taught by the Epistle to the Hebrews, would be recognized our great High Priest, who had entered within the veil. So throughout. The faithful were promised that they should eat of the hidden *manna*; should have a white *stone*, with a *name* written in it, an allusion to the precious stones on the high priest's breastplate; should be made a *pillar* in the *temple*, like the two which constituted the Beautiful Gate of the temple at Jerusalem. Heaven itself is patterned after the same edifice. The four living creatures are the *cherubic shapes* that were put upon the cover of the ark, and blazoned in needlework upon the curtains and veil. Jesus is a bleeding *Lamb*. The grand *chorus* singing responsive are the sacred musicians answering each other in the high worship of the Sabbath. The redeemed saints are sealed persons of *the tribes* of Israel.

The angels with the sounding *trumpets* are the priests that gave by trumpet the signal for the movements of the camp in the wilderness. The utter desolation of persecuting Jerusalem is seen in the *temple* thrown open to public view, and the *ark* exposed to the profane gaze of the multitude. The song of the martyrs is the song of *Moses* and the Lamb, in allusion to the pean of triumph sung over Pharaoh on the shore of the Red Sea. The temple filled with smoke was the *Shekinah*, of cloud and of fire. The church in her glory is the *New Jerusalem* — the *tabernacle* of God with men. And this new city is the *temple*, with its *foundations*, its *gates*, its outflowing living *waters*, its exclusion of all *unclean* things, etc. Certainly there could be no serious difficulty in Christians understanding these manifold allusions. They must know both that they were not to be taken in strict literalness, and also what were the ideas which they were intended to convey.

(2) The Jewish nation had a peculiar *history* recorded with great particularity in their sacred books, but comparatively little known to the heathen world. One of the great treatises of Josephus was an account of his nation composed expressly to give the Romans some idea of the antiquities, both religious and secular, of the people whose capital they had just destroyed. That history of the nation was full of remarkable

events, some of them commemorated by monuments, the recollection of which was to the nation what the Norman conquest, the Magna Charta, the Reformation, etc., were to the English, or Bunker Hill, the Declaration of Independence, and Emancipation are to ourselves. Very many of these were connected with the overthrow of oppressors—the Egyptians, the Philistines, the Canaanites, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and, in the time of the Maccabees, the Syrians. Here, then, was an abundant and most fitting supply of allusion and imagery under which to describe the downfall of these new persecutors of God's people. Hence the designation of the "doctrine of Balaam"; "that woman Jezebel"; the sealing of the twelve tribes," although this subdivision of the Hebrew people had long ceased to be as a fact; the plagues upon the land and the waters, and the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars as among the plagues of Egypt; the designation of Jerusalem as Sodom and Egypt, and Rome as Babylon; the drying up of the Euphrates to admit an invading army, the prototype of which was in the crossing of the Jordan into Canaan; the great battle of Armageddon, named after the ancient fight at Megiddo, near the river Kishon (Judges v. 19); the fall of Babylon, and the dirge over it in imitation of Isa. xlvii. and Ezek. xxvii.; the call of the fowls of heaven to the supper of

the Lord, after Ezek. xxxix. 17-22. Every such allusion in this book, unintelligible to those who knew nothing of Hebrew history, would at once be recognized by the Christians, and as they recalled the incidents from which they were taken, would speak to them of the divine protection and deliverance from their persecutors, as their fathers were delivered from heathen oppressors in ancient times.

(3) In like manner the Old Testament contained a great body of *prophetic imagery and phraseology*, the import of which had come to be as well understood as the simplest utterances of prose. Here was first the Theophany, God coming in the clouds of heaven, a figure originating doubtless in the divine manifestation at Sinai. Ex. xix. 16-20. Here were the horses of Zechariah (Zech. i. 8), of different colors, and the two olive trees and the two anointed witnesses (iv. 11, 14). Here the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars, the well-known symbol of the destruction of hostile cities and nations. (Compare Isa. xiii. 10-16, xxiv. 23, xxxiv. 4, Ezek. xxxii. 7, etc.) Here were David's man-child, that was to rule the nations (Ps. ii. 7, 9), and Ezekiel's measuring reed, and new temple, and Daniel's beasts and vision of judgment and resurrection of the martyrs, Gog and Magog, and Michael and his angels fighting in heaven against the foes of God's people,

and the new heavens and new earth of Isaiah, and the bride of the forty-fifth Psalm, and of the Song of Songs. Can it be doubted that persons instructed as the Jews were in their ancient Scriptures, knew, at least in some good degree, the import of all this prophetic imagery, and had the best facilities for discerning its import when put to a new use in this Judeo-Christian book?

(4) There may be mentioned in this connection that fanciful method of interpretation in vogue among the Rabbis of Christ's day, which they called *Gematria*. It consisted in plays upon letters and numbers, and specially upon names of persons. Our modern anagram resembles it in part. According to this method, the word *Nicolaitan* is supposed by some to have been invented as a substitute for *Balaamite*, the word *Nicolaus* in Greek signifying the same thing as Balaam in Hebrew, viz., "conqueror of the people." So the famous "number of the beast" was made up after the regular Rabbinic rule, the letters in his name being taken in their numerical value, and then added together, making the sum six hundred and sixty-six. The latter is a remarkable instance, showing how entirely this book was conformed to well-known Jewish customs of that day, and that the true method of interpreting it is to be found in those customs. It is not to be supposed, indeed, that these "mysteries" were fa-

miliar to the unlearned, but they were known to those skilled in the Scriptures, and as such constituted a fit method of securing the ends sought in this book, of at once concealing the idea from the enemies of the church, and making it known to its teachers and those who could use it wisely.

(5) It should perhaps be added, as among the means enjoyed by the primitive churches for the understanding of this book, that *its author lived to a very advanced age*. The date of his death is not precisely known. It is conceded that it took place under the emperor Trajan, who reigned from A.D. 99 to 117. Taking it midway of those dates, 108, and it would show that John survived, after writing the book, forty years, if written in the time of Nero, or from twelve to fifteen if written under Domitian. So long time, therefore, the churches, at least in Asia, enjoyed the advantages of his personal instructions. It cannot be doubted that he would explain, as far as necessary, the meaning of this revelation as he understood it, especially to those who were then suffering, or were in constant peril under the persecutions that raged about them. It would be an exposition authoritative and reliable, while given with a discretion that would not endanger those who were strengthened and comforted by it.

3. What evidence have we, then, that the primitive churches *did*, in fact, understand this book, and *what* their understanding of it was?

In answering this inquiry, it is to be borne in mind that our materials for ascertaining the opinions of the earliest Christians upon any subject are very scanty. How far the special messages to the seven churches served to instruct and encourage them or their more sorely tried brethren at Rome, in the persecution by Nero, it is impossible to say. It is known that prior to the siege of Jerusalem, warned by the words of Christ in Matt. xxiv. 16, the believers in Jerusalem fled from the city, and found a safe refuge at Pella, beyond the Jordan. They certainly understood the predictions of that discourse as having their primary fulfillment, at least, in the events of that day.

Our knowledge of the Roman persecutions, from Domitian to Diocletian, is derived from the histories of Eusebius (born about A.D. 270), Lactantius (about the same age), Augustine (born 354), and others. Some interesting facts are derived from the ancient inscriptions still extant in the catacombs of Rome. From all these sources we gather the following particulars as bearing upon our present inquiry.

(1) In general, they understood that the portions of the book describing the beast from the sea, with seven heads and ten horns, and his scarlet appareled rider (Chapters 13-19) referred to *the persecuting emperors of Rome previous to Constantine*. It was from this that the early opinion

arose that the persecutions of that period were just ten in number, corresponding to the ten heads of the beast, each one of which represented a king. Rev. xvii. 12. A more careful study of the facts shows that that distinct number cannot well be made out, there having been many more periods of violence than that; indeed, the entire space of almost two hundred and fifty years was one of intolerance and severity, intended to suppress the new and unlawful religion. But the popular enumeration was none the less significant, as showing the understanding of this book. Mosheim (Com. Vol. 1, p. 128) represents the following to be the mode of reasoning prevailing in the early churches: "Since by the woman whom John saw is to be understood Rome, and by the ten horns ten kings, there can be no doubt but that these ten kings must be ten Roman emperors; and since the wars of these ten kings with the Lamb, that is Christ, unquestionably signify their endeavors, by means of laws and punishments, to extirpate the Christians, and entirely abolish their religion, it is evident that ten Roman emperors would oppress and persecute Christ in the persons of his disciples." Much more evidence of this prevailing opinion might easily be adduced. Irenæus, himself a martyr under the emperor Severus, reckoned up the letters in the mystical name of the beast as spelling, in Greek, *Lateinos*, the

Latin, i. e., the Roman emperor. There is no trace in that early day of the opinion which has so much prevailed among modern commentators that the Book of Revelation is designed to give a synopsis of the history of the church through all time. They regarded it as a book *for them*, describing *their own* persecutions, and the conflicts in which *they* were to suffer and to conquer.

(2) They gathered from this book that the churches, under these persecutions, *were to come off victorious over their foes*. Everywhere, in all the annals of the martyrs and confessors, are utterances of hope, and anticipations of triumph. In the catacombs at Rome, Jesus, as a slain lamb, crowned and sceptered, was depicted upon the walls, the emblem of victory. Very frequently the monogram, comprising the first two letters of his name, is shown, with the Alpha and Omega of Rev. i. 11, which signify his eternity. The binding of Satan, described in Rev. xx. 1-6, was understood to signify Christ's triumph over the arch enemy of the church. An early Christian seal shows a cross, with Alpha and Omega on either side, its foot resting on a writhing serpent, and the legend SALVS — salvation — underneath. A monumental painting was set up by Constantine, the first Christian emperor, in his new city of Constantinople, for the express purpose of celebrating the triumph of Christianity. It showed

a portrait of himself with the cross over his head, and under his feet Satan, in the form of a serpent, falling headlong into the bottomless pit. "For," says Eusebius, "the sacred oracles in the books of God's prophets have described him as a dragon and a crooked serpent, and for this reason the emperor thus publicly displayed a painted resemblance (*cera igne resoluta*) of the dragon beneath his own and his children's feet, stricken through with a dart, and cast headlong into the depths of the sea. In this manner he intended to represent that concealed adversary of the human race, and to indicate that he was consigned to the gulf of perdition by virtue of the trophy of salvation placed above his head." Here again, let us notice in what a practical manner the early Christians interpreted and applied this book. The binding of Satan was not, to them, a mysterious event that should happen in some far distant age of the world, but one of their own time. As it was Satan, the old dragon, that had stirred up the beast and the false prophet to make war upon the church, so when their power was overcome, and Christianity itself gained the throne, it was the binding of Satan, an event worthy to be celebrated by a public monument in the street of the new city, which was henceforth to bear the name of the Christian emperor.

(3) But it was pre-eminently the *rewards of fidelity* under persecution, — the blessedness of the martyrs and confessors who suffered for Christ's sake, which were taught by this book, and which made the bloody amphitheater, the cross, and the flames so radiant with the triumphs of their faith.

They became familiar with the idea of a *special resurrection* of the martyrs, designated as “the *first resurrection*.” This was in terms the teaching of Rev. xx. 4–6, and the phraseology there used was such that they could not help applying it to the sufferers from among themselves. The persons seen in the vision were those who “were *beheaded* for the witness of Jesus.” The original word translated “beheaded” is a verb made out of the name of the Roman two-handed sword (*pelekus*) which was the instrument usually employed in decapitation. Thus the very word itself pointed to a *Roman* execution.* Moreover they were persons who had “not worshiped *the beast*, neither his image, neither received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands.” But the *beast*, as we have shown, was to them a concealed name for the Roman emperor, and his worship that

* We may be pardoned a familiar illustration which will more forcibly show this. The Indian war club — a tomahawk — has been made into a verb in the same manner. If, in the colonial days of New England, a writer should have affirmed that he saw the remains of those that had been *tomahawked* on such or such an occasion, the word itself would have disclosed that they were victims of an *Indian* massacre.

idolatrous homage which the laws required to be paid to him and the imperial standard that bore his effigy, which itself was but a part of that great system of Pagan worship of which the emperor was the head — the Pontifex Maximus.

They could not mistake, then, as to who was meant by the promise of this blessed resurrection of the martyrs. As little could they doubt its general meaning. Every scholar knows that the original word, ἀνάστασις, does not of itself signify the resurrection of the body. It is simply the *living again*, or as we commonly call it, the future life. The word “first,” also, very often signifies foremost in rank, dignity, blessedness. In Luke xv. 22, the “best robe” is literally the *first* robe. The “chief rooms” at feasts, the “chief estates,” being “chief” among the disciples, etc., are simply the *first* rooms, *first* estates, being *first*. The “first resurrection,” then, interpreted by the customary phraseology of those times was simply a peculiarly glorious and blessed life after death. The stroke of the Roman *pelekus*, the flames which consumed the mutilated body, were not as their persecutors thought the *end* of them. “Now we shall see,” said the latter as the ashes were cast into the Tiber or the Rhone, “if they will rise again.” Uhlhorn’s Conflict, p. 296.

Nay, more, not only was it taught that the martyrs attained at once a peculiarly blessed heavenly

reward, but its *distinctive* honor consisted in being admitted to *reign with Christ*. "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment," i. e., judicial dignity and functions, "were given them, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. This is the first resurrection." The same thing had been said in the Epistles to the seven churches. "He that overcometh—to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron—even as I received of my Father." Chapter ii. 26, 27. "To him will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also"—the first Martyr—"overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Chapter iii. 21. Indeed, even Paul testifies that it had passed into an adage—a common saying (λόγος) in the early churches, which he adds emphatically is a true one, that "if we die with Christ, we shall also live with him; if we *suffer*, we shall also reign with him." 2 Tim. ii. 12.

Now, that this *was* the way in which the persecuted infant churches understood and applied this twentieth chapter—that it is not merely *our* interpretation carried back and fathered upon them—is a matter of the most positive historic certainty. In his famous sixteenth chapter, Gibbon says, "They inculcated with becoming diligence that the fire of martyrdom supplied every defect and expiated every sin; that while the

souls of ordinary Christians were obliged to pass through a slow and painful purification, the triumphant sufferers entered into the immediate fruition of eternal bliss, where, in the society of the patriarchs, the apostles, and the prophets, *they reigned with Christ, and acted as his assessors in the universal judgment of mankind.*" So Mosheim (Com. I., p. 136): "It was conceived that they were taken up directly into heaven, and admitted to *a share in the divine counsels and administration*; that they sat *as judges with God*, enjoying the highest marks of his favor, and possessing influence sufficient to obtain from him whatever they might make the object of their prayers."

Hence the "crown of martyrdom" became the peculiar designation of this supreme honor; to attain their crown, a common euphemism for death. Cyprian, describing the sufferings of the victims, says, "Tortures overtook them, tortures wherein the torturer ceases not, without escape of condemnation, without the consolation of death; tortures which do not dismiss them speedily *to their crown*, but rack them until they overthrow their faith; except perhaps that God in his mercy removed one here and another there in the midst of his torments, and so he *attained his crown*, not by the full ending of his torture, but by the suddenness of death." *

* Uhlhorn, "Conflict," p. 306.

In his unique work on the Catacombs of Rome, Withrow says: "The palm and crown are symbols that frequently occur, often in a very rude form. Although common also to Jewish and pagan art, they have received in Christian symbolism a loftier significance than they ever possessed before. They call to mind that great multitude whom no man can number, with whom faith sees the dear departed walk in white, bearing palms in their hands" (p. 285). It was doubtless in accordance with the same idea that early Christian art surrounded the heads of the martyrs with the *aureole* * — the crown of light — in token of their attainment of the promised crown and throne above.

As a natural consequence of views like these, we find among the primitive Christians a peculiar homage paid to the martyrs, which in the later centuries degenerated into the veneration, and even the adoration, of relics. "What honor," exclaims Uhlhorn, "was shown to the martyrs and confessors! The Christians embraced them on their way to the place of execution, and kissed their chains in the prisons. They were given as honorable a burial as was possible, and no heed was paid to the danger incurred in procuring this for them. With diligent care their names and the story of their martyrdom were recorded for a

* Generally represented in modern copies by the simple oval line, without rays.

memorial. And if, perchance, the persecution ceased for a while, and some returned from the prisons or from exile, how jubilantly they were greeted! The Christians hastened to meet them, crowded round them, embraced them with heartfelt affection, and hung on their necks with kisses." p. 372.

Nay,—and here we come to the most remarkable fact of all—these anticipations of the peculiar honors and rewards of the martyrs grew at length into a passionate desire to attain them. Men, women, and even children, eagerly sought condemnation to the stake or to the wild beasts. They boldly confessed themselves to be Christians—nay, they voluntarily offered themselves to the authorities, and solicited the glorious boon. Sulpicius Severus says: "They rushed, vying with each other, into the glorious struggles, and many sought martyrdoms by glorious deaths more eagerly than now they seek, with low ambitions, even the episcopate." So, when Ignatius was about to suffer, he wrote to his friends at Rome, urging them not to fear in his behalf: "I beseech you that you show not an unseasonable goodwill towards me. Suffer me to be food for the wild beasts, by whom I shall attain unto God. For I am the wheat of God, and I shall be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ."

But I have space to pursue the subject no further. What I have said will be sufficient, I trust, to show how thoroughly practical to themselves the Book of Revelation was made by the early churches. To them it was not in its main scope a book for the distant ages. There are things in it—glimpses of matters which, as their terms showed, stretched beyond the general range of the book as stated on its title page, such as the binding of Satan, the thousand years, Gog and Magog, and a few others, about which they fell into as fanciful errors as others since them have done, but, with these exceptions, it was a message from heaven of the most immediate practical value to them. And I believe that if we would ascertain its true meaning, as intended by its inspired Author, we must go back to that day and study it in the light of those times, the existing state of the churches, their actual needs, and the wise and loving purposes of the Lord, who in the martyr fires of those first three centuries was preparing the immovable foundations of that kingdom which should extend over all the earth, and of whose duration there should be no end.

THE REVELATION.

I.

PREFATORY.

IT is one of the many disadvantages attending • the study of the Scriptures in our version, that they are printed in a manner so different from other books. The REVELATION is not, so to speak, a chapter or section of a large work called the BIBLE, as one might infer from the way in which it stands on the pages of the sacred volume. It is strictly an independent book. It has what in modern books would be a title-page, a dedication, a motto condensing into a single paragraph the subject of the work and its author—all preceding the regular body of the work. First:

THE TITLE-PAGE.

CHAPTER I. (1) THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, WHICH GOD GAVE HIM TO SHOW UNTO HIS SERVANTS, EVEN THE THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS: AND HE SENT AND SIGNIFIED IT BY HIS ANGEL UNTO HIS SERVANT JOHN; (2) WHO BARE WITNESS OF THE WORD OF GOD, AND OF THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST, EVEN OF ALL THINGS THAT HE SAW. (3) BLESSED IS HE THAT READETH, AND THEY THAT HEAR THE WORDS OF THE PROPHECY, AND

KEEP THE THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN THEREIN: FOR THE TIME IS AT HAND.*

It obviously consists of two parts, an announcement of the nature of the book, and a blessing upon those who use it. It is generally held that the words "he that readeth" and "they that hear" refer to the official reader and members of a congregation, showing that the book was intended for public use throughout the early churches. This will suggest one of the reasons why those portions that speak of the persecuting authorities under whom Christians were suffering, should be couched in enigmatic terms for concealment from the uninitiated.

THE DEDICATION

occupies the next three verses. This consists also of two parts, a solemn benediction upon those to whom the work was addressed, and a doxology of praise to Him through whom salvation and exaltation to glory are bestowed.

CHAPTER I. (4) JOHN to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from him which is and which was and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; (5) and from Jesus Christ, *who* is the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loveth us and loosed us from our sins by his blood; (6) and he made us *to be* a kingdom, *to be* priests unto his God and his Father; to him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

*The text is that of the Revised Version.

It is a question why seven churches only are named in this dedication, when it is known that there were more than these within the territory named, and also that the work must have been intended equally for all other churches which were in similar circumstances of trial. The most probable reason is to be found in the peculiar habit of the Jews of regarding seven as a symbolic number standing for the whole, as seven days rounded out the week. We shall find very frequent instances of this use of the word in this book. By the seven Spirits, we are probably to understand the Holy Spirit, in his "completeness and universality of working." (Alford). See Chapter iv. 5. The word "witness" means also "a martyr," and was doubtless used to intimate to the suffering saints that their Lord himself had gone before them in the experience of persecution.

The seventh verse is a sort of

MOTTO,

or sub-title, which in modern books would be printed on a page alone as giving a condensed summary of the work.

CHAPTER I. (7) Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they which pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen.

This is followed in verse eight by what is equivalent to an autograph signature of the Lord

himself, announcing his divine titles and authenticating the whole with his own hand.

THE DIVINE TITLES.

CHAPTER I. (8) I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty.

The first eight verses are thus prefatory, and only at the ninth do we reach the proper commencement of the work.

VISION OF CHRIST THE REVEALER.

CHAPTER I. (9) I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience *which are* in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. (10) I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet saying, (11) What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* to the seven churches; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. (12) And I turned to see the voice which spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; (13) and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. (14) And his head and his hair were white as white wool, *white* as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; (15) and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters. (16) And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. (17) And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last,

(18) and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. (19) Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter; (20) the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.

Ver. 9. *The patience of Jesus Christ* is the suffering or patient endurance of persecution for his sake. Compare James v. 11. — *For the word*, is on account of the word, etc. — Ver. 10. *The Lord's Day*, usually understood of the "first day of the week," as in 1 Cor. xv. 2. Some understand it, however, as "the day of the Lord," in 1 Cor. i. 8; v. 5; 2 Cor. i. 14; 1 Thess. v. 2; 2 Thess. ii. 2; 2 Pet. iii. 10, i.e., the period of the Parousia, or second coming. In the latter sense it would be most accordant with the scope of this book. Just as Ezekiel was in vision taken by the Spirit of God into a high mountain (Chapter xl. 2), so John was taken into the scenes of the coming Messianic period in which the great events herein described were to be fulfilled. — *As of a trumpet*, means loud and startling like a trumpet note. — *To see the voice*, to see Him whose voice it was. — *Candlesticks*, rather, lamps. The ancients did not use candles. — 14. *White*, i.e., glistening. — 16. *Two-edged sword*. Probably this was not *visible*, for it would make a very incongruous figure. The idea is that the words he

spoke were piercing and irresistible, like the stroke of a sword. — 18. *Amen*, in our common version a word ejaculated by the apostle, expressive of his delight at the announcement. — *Keys of Hades* — the underworld, to which all souls were supposed to go at death. At his resurrection Jesus had come from that world, and had carried away its keys; in other words, had abolished it, so that thenceforth his people should not go thither, but ascend directly to the place he had prepared for them, to be forever with him. — 19. *The things which are*, rather, *what* they are, i.e., what the things which thou hast seen signify. — *Shall come to pass hereafter*, rather, which shall be after these. In other words, he was to write down the vision already granted him, and its meaning, and what was to occur immediately after. Two, not three, classes of things are referred to.

Such was the wonderful vision which broke upon the enraptured gaze of the exiled apostle on that rocky islet of Patmos. How admirably fitting to the needs of the churches in that time of trouble! To human view, the Master whom they served had been in lowly condition. A Galilean, a peasant, poor, without influential friends, condemned by all the respectable of the land, executed as a malefactor on a slave's gibbet — how was it possible that some of these things should

not creep at times into their secret thoughts, and prompt to the most painful misgivings. Was he the Lord after all? Were they not throwing their lives away for an impostor? John himself, indeed, could not forget that night on the mountain top in Cæsarea Philippi, when the glorious light of the transfiguration had made the midnight as bright as noon; but even that was but a vision fading in the dim distance of the past. What a boon, then, to the oppressed churches, such a revelation as this! Let a new conception of their Lord fill their minds after this. Behold that majestic figure, in royal robes and golden girdle, his hair like rays of light, his eyes like the lightning flash, his face like the sun at midday, his voice like the far-sounding waves of the sea! In his open palm, symbolical both of possession and protection, he holds, like a starry circlet, his churches. His voice, as a flaming sword, leaps forth to execute his commands, and a voice, majestic as the ocean, proclaims him the ever-living Lord both of death and life. It was such a Being, in fact, that they served. What was Nero, what all earthly power and malice, in comparison with him and his protection? What had death itself to terrify, when He who held the keys of death and Hades in his possession was their friend!

Nothing could be more timely than such a new

revelation of the power and glory of the Redeemer to the suffering infant churches. Can we doubt that it is for their sakes primarily and chiefly that he dictates the messages which follow? Can we doubt that they will be messages which his people can understand, summonses to courage and brave endurance for his sake, assurances of his own presence in the darkest day and the thickest storm, promises of victory even by death over their foes, and inspirations of glorious hope, when the martyrs' throne and crown shall succeed the sword and the stake and the wild beasts? What wonder is it that, as such disclosures break on the enraptured view of the apostle, he should be impatient for their speedy fulfillment, and respond again and again, with eager anticipation, "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

II.

MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

BEFORE proceeding to those general predictions which related to all the churches, the Redeemer addresses a special message to each of the seven, taking notice of its peculiar condition and spiritual wants, and administering special encouragement or admonition as it needed. These constitute the well-known Epistles to the Seven Churches. A careful analysis of these shows them to have been constructed in a quite artificial manner. Each consists of seven subdivisions similarly arranged.

1. The superscription.

2. The title of the author, in each case taken from one of the personal characteristics described in the glorious vision of the Lord in the preceding chapter.

3. A solemn declaration of the state or character of each church as seen by his eye.

4. An expression of commendation or censure.

5. An exhortation to perseverance or penitence.

6. A special promise to "him that overcometh."

7. A command to hear what the Spirit saith to each.

It may be noticed, also, that in each instance the exhortation to perseverance or to penitence is enforced by motives derived from the title of the Lord named in that instance. Thus, for Ephesus the title is, "He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks," and the admonition, "I will move thy candlestick out of its place." For Smyrna, "He which was dead, and lived again." Promise, "Shall not be hurt of the second death." For Pergamum, "He that hath the sharp two-edged sword." Threatening, "I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth." For Thyatira, "Who hath his eyes like a flame of fire." Admonition, "I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts." For Sardis, "He that hath the seven Spirits of God," implying swift and all-penetrating omniscience. Warning, "I will come as a thief." For Philadelphia, "He that hath the key of David." Promise, "I have set before thee a door opened." For Laodicea, "The faithful and true Witness," i.e., in Greek, *martyr*. Promise, "He shall sit down with me in my throne, as I—the first martyr—sit with my Father in his throne."

If it be asked why this artificialness of style and structure was employed, the answer is, because it was in the method of *prophetic* language of that time. Prophecy, both in the Old Testament and in heathen writings, was nearly always

written in poetry. But the style of poetry then was different from what it is now. We write it in measured lines, each having a certain number of feet, with regularly recurring accent, rhyming terminations, etc. They used *parallelism*, the members of sentences recurring in regular order, in couplets or triplets, or combinations of couplets and triplets, sometimes by repetition of the thought, sometimes by contrast, sometimes by amplification, the successive clauses rising one above another in the form of a climax, etc. Examples of all these abound in the Psalms and the Prophets. The ultimate reason for this is, doubtless, in the fact that it was pleasing to the taste, just as an exquisite poem delights us more than the same number of equally select words expressing precisely the same thoughts, would do if written as prose. It serves also as a valuable aid to memory, just as the sweet hymns learned in our childhood become engraven on our hearts, and remain indelible there as long as life itself lasts.

Our space will permit us only a brief glance at these seven messages.

EPHESUS.

CHAPTER II. (1) To the angel of the church in Ephesus write;

These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: (2) I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try

them which call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false; (3) and thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary. (4) But I have *this* against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love. (5) Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent. (6) But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. (7) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Ephesus was the capital of the province, and her church probably the foremost of the seven. All antiquity represents John himself to have been its pastor. This church, with a single exception, is commended. It had borne hardship with patience; it had rejected false teachers; it had been fruitful in Christian work; and especially it had refused to tolerate the "Nicolaitans," a class of people of obscure origin, but probably a sort of ancient *free-lovers*, dissolute in doctrine and practice. The exception, however, was a grave one — the church had lost its first love, the zeal and ardor with which it first espoused the gospel. For this it was severely reproved and threatened, if disobedient, with the loss of its existence as a church.

SMYRNA.

CHAPTER II. (8) And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write;

These things saith the first and the last, which was dead,

and lived *again*: (9) I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. (10) Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. (11) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Smyrna, forty miles north of Ephesus, is commended throughout. The church there had apparently suffered from persecution by the Jews — called by our Lord “a synagogue of Satan,” — and was to suffer more for a period of “ten days,” i.e., a very short time. It is noticeable that this city, whose church was thus commended, has survived during all the centuries to this day. It is a large commercial seaport, with a population of about 100,000.

PERGAMUM.

CHAPTER II. (12) And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write;

These things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword: (13) I know where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan’s throne is: and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth. (14) But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. (15) So hast thou also some that hold the

teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner. (16) Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth. (17) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.

Pergamum lay still farther north, about sixty miles from Smyrna. The language of the message implies that it was a hard place, "where Satan's throne is." Violent persecution had raged there against the church, in which the faithful Antipas suffered as a martyr. The church, however, had stood firm, and held fast their Christian name. Some among them had fallen in with the loose practices of the heathen, after the example of Balaam (Compare Numbers xxv. 1-5 with xxxi. 16); and some had yielded to Nicolaitanism, and for these sins the church is severely censured and commanded to repent.

THYATIRA.

CHAPTER II. (18) And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write;

These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like unto burnished brass: (19) I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first. (20) But I have *this* against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols. (21) And I

gave her time that she should repent; and she willeth not to repent of her fornication. (22) Behold, I do cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. (23) And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works. (24) But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, which know not the deep things of Satan, as they say; I cast upon you none other burden. (25) Howbeit that which ye have, hold fast till I come. (26) And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: (27) and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father: (28) and I will give him the morning star. (29) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

Thyatira was east of Pergamum, about thirty miles. It was the home of Lydia, the purple merchant of Philippi, who was one of Paul's first converts in Macedonia. This church, too, was more or less infected with a corruption similar to those already named, and, most remarkably under the leadership, apparently, of its pastor's wife. The phrase, "the woman" (verse 20), is corrected by the best textual authority to "thy wife," i.e., the wife of the "angel" of the church. She is called Jezebel, not because that was her name, but probably because her character and conduct resembled that of the heathen wife of Ahab (1 Kings xvi. 30-33; xxi. 5-25). She might be called a second Jezebel. Licentious im-

purities, which constituted so large a part of idolatry, were among the most formidable sources of corruption in the infant churches.

SARDIS.

CHAPTER III. (1) And to the angel of the church in Sardis write;

These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead. (2) Be thou watchful, and stablish the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no works of thine fulfilled before my God. (3) Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep *it*, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. (4) But thou hast a few names in Sardis which did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy. (5) He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. (6) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

Sardis was about forty miles south of Thyatira. The condition of its church was not unlike that of Ephesus — one of general coldness — but probably aggravated by much positive wickedness. The phrase, “a few names in Sardis,” implies a notoriously corrupt place. Still, Sardis put on a good show, “having a name to live,” though the life of piety was nearly extinct. No church is more sternly reproved than this.

PHILADELPHIA.

CHAPTER III. (7) And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write;

These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and none shall shut, and that shutteth, and none openeth: (8) I know thy works (behold I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut), that thou hast a little power, and didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name. (9) Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them which say they are Jews and they are not, but do lie; behold I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. (10) Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that *hour* which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. (11) I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown. (12) He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name. (13) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

Philadelphia, thirty miles southeast of Sardis, receives almost entire approval. Her promised reward was to be characteristic of her fidelity. The church, amid prevalent backsliding, had kept her faith, and showed that she had a measure of spiritual strength. She should have, therefore, an open door of usefulness in the cause of her Lord. Her Jewish adversaries and troublers should be compelled (verse 9) to acknowledge her

truth, and see the proof of her acceptance with God. The special promise was also added, that in the great persecutions which were approaching she should be "kept," — possibly shielded from harm, or perhaps simply kept by the upholding grace of Christ, so as to be "able to bear it."

LAODICEA.

CHAPTER III. (14) And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write;

These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God: (15) I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. (16) So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth. (17) Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked: (18) I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire that thou mayest become rich; and white garments that thou mayest clothe thyself, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. (19) As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. (20) Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. (21) He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne. (22) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

Lastly, the church of Laodicea, fifty miles southeast of Philadelphia, is severely reprov'd. It had backslidden to such a degree as to become

absolutely offensive to the Lord, and yet was so conceited as to fancy itself in a most thriving spiritual condition. It was solemnly enjoined to search itself, discern its true needs, and hasten to attain the righteousness which humility and dependence on Christ alone could give.

Such was the state of these primitive Asiatic churches — representatives, doubtless, of most others at that day — as they stood on the eve of the great struggle in which Christianity and Hea-thenism were to engage in deadly conflict for a period of two and a half centuries. It was to be a contest between Jesus, the crucified one, and Rome, the crucifier. It was to be a great “temptation, which should come upon all the world — the whole Roman empire — to try them that dwell upon the earth.” For such a struggle the churches needed to rouse and prepare themselves. They needed to gird on the whole armor of God, that they might withstand in the evil day. They needed the promises of the presence and upholding power of the Lord, and of the glorious reward attending them if faithful in heaven. With special messages like these addressed to each church, they might be prepared to look upon the unfolding scroll of prophecy, as it should open to them in the rest of this book, and read the things which in the permissive wisdom of the Lord were “shortly to come to pass.”

Says the anonymous author of the English "Parousia":

"No one can fail to be struck with the indications that an expected catastrophe is at hand. To Ephesus it is said, 'I will come unto thee quickly' (Chap. ii. 5); to Smyrna, 'Thou shalt have tribulation ten days' (ii. 10); to Pergamum, 'I will come unto thee quickly' (ii. 16); to Thyatira, 'Hold fast till I come' (ii. 25); to Sardis, 'I will come on thee as a thief' (iii. 3); to Philadelphia, 'Behold, I come quickly' (iii. 2); to Laodicea, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock' (iii. 20). It is impossible to conceive that these urgent warnings had no special meaning to those to whom they were addressed; that they meant no more to them than they do to us; that they refer to a consummation which has never yet taken place. This would be to deprive the words of all significance. What can be more evident than that in these sharp, short, epigrammatic utterances, all is intensely urgent, pressing, vehement, as if not a moment were to be lost, and negligence or delay might be fatal? But how could such passionate urgency be consistent with a far-off consummation, which might come in some distant period of time, which after eighteen hundred years is still in the future? Why resort to such an unnatural and unsatisfactory explanation, when we know that there was a predicted

and expected consummation which was to take place in the days when these churches flourished? We therefore conclude that the period of recompense and retribution referred to in all these epistles to the churches was the approaching 'day of the Lord'—the Parousia, which the Saviour declared would take place before the passing away of the generation which witnessed his miracles and rejected his message."

III.

THE FIRST PROPHETIC BOOK.

THE HEAVENLY SESSION.

CHAPTER IV. (1) After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard, *a voice* as of a trumpet speaking with me, one saying, Come up hither, and I will shew thee the things which must come to pass hereafter. (2) Straightway I was in the Spirit: and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne; (3) and he that sat *was* to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon. (4) And round about the throne *were* four and twenty thrones: and upon the thrones *I saw* four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments; and on their heads crowns of gold. (5) And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. And *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; (6) and before the throne, as it were a glassy sea like unto crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. (7) And the first creature *was* like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face as of a man, and the fourth creature *was* like a flying eagle. (8) And the four living creatures, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within: and they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the Lord God, the Almighty, which was and which is and which is to come. (9) And when the living creatures

shall give glory and honour and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, to him that liveth for ever and ever, (10) the four and twenty elders shall fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying, (11) Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created.

The apostle says he looked upward, and behold! an *opened door*; i.e., a seeming aperture in the blue concave above him. It is not meant that he saw the opening made, but only there was an opening. The ancients, we must remember, conceived of the sky as a solid expanse, a *firmanent* over-arching the earth. As he looked intently at this, behold! a *Voice*, viz., the one which he had heard at first, as described in Chapter i. 10, 11, which was loud, clear, and piercing, like the blast of a trumpet. This Voice appears to come down from above the sky, though the Person who speaks is not visible. As, however, it is the same voice he has heard before, he knows it must be from Him whom he saw at that time, and who gave him the messages to the churches. This Voice bids him come up thither, not personally, but in vision, to be shown the things which were appointed to take place "after these things," i.e., after what had been mentioned in those epistles.

Immediately he is "in the Spirit," or the state

of prophetic ecstasy, and looking through the opened sky he sees a *Throne*. Of its form and appearance he says nothing. Oriental thrones were of different shapes, sometimes an ornamented arm-chair, as is often seen on the Ninevite sculptures; sometimes a richly cushioned divan, on which the monarch might either sit or recline. An example of the former may have been seen in Solomon's great ivory throne, described in 1 Kings x. 18-20; and of the latter in the throne of Queen Esther, called "the bed" in Esther vii. 8. In the latter case it was probably large enough for the king and queen both; and some such idea seems to be implied in Christ's sitting "with his Father in his throne." Rev. iii. 21. In the present case, the absence of all description tends to enhance the sentiment of awe and sublimity inspired by the august scene.

"Before the throne was a glassy sea like unto crystal," i.e., a brilliant, transparent *pavement* corresponding to those which are common in eastern palaces. The writer remembers a visit to the palace of the king of Holland, at the Hague, a few years ago, where one of the most noticeable features, as he entered the throne room, was the magnificently polished floor, in which all objects were reflected as in a mirror. These pavements were often of marble, of inlaid or tessellated patterns, like the paved courts of the temple at Je-

rusalem. See in Esther i. 6, the description of the Persian palace — “the beds (divans) were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red and blue and white and black marble.”

The apostle first sees “upon the throne *One* sitting.” In the original there is no word to designate the occupant of the throne; as if the sacred writer could not venture upon any term worthy to stand as his representative. Our English translators, to meet the grammatical need, supplied, in italics, the word *One*. This “sitting One” was in appearance “like a jasper stone and a sardius,” i.e., resplendent in colored radiance, like those gems; the jasper a variegated stone of green, yellow, and purple, and the sardine, or what we call the carnelian, of a bright red or blood color. Surrounding and enveloping the whole was an *iris* (rainbow) of emerald, i.e., in which the green predominated. Thus the order of the colors from the interior outwards was nearly that of the hues of the rainbow, the whole forming a spectacle of the most gorgeous magnificence. Whether beyond this any special ideas of the divine attributes were intended to be suggested — the ruddy hues symbolizing justice and severity, and the softer green ones mercy and gentleness — is left to each reader to judge for himself.

Around and beneath the throne were, as the

common version has it, the "*Four Beasts*," a most unfortunate translation. The original is, "Living Ones," precisely as in Ezekiel's vision of the "Living Creatures," Ezek. i. 5 — one of the most obscure topics contained in the Bible. This obscurity, however, is believed to arise rather from a want of familiarity with oriental conceptions and modes of representing them, than from any insuperable difficulties in the subject itself.

These Living Ones are described as four-winged figures, having respectively the heads of a lion, a calf or bullock, a man, and an eagle. They will be recognized as very similar to the figures which were placed on the cover of the sacred ark (Ex. xxxvii. 8, 9), embroidered upon the curtains of the tabernacle (Ex. xxxvi. 35), set as statues, and carved upon the doors in the temple of Solomon (1 Kings vi. 23, 32), and seen by Ezekiel at the commencement of his prophetic visions (Ezek. i. 4, 25). A careful examination of these passages will disclose some variations in them, but the general features are much the same in all.

In endeavoring to discover the meaning of these figures, it may help us to remember that something very like to them are exceedingly common in the antiquities of all the East. In the burial palaces of Nineveh and Babylon, the most striking figures are those of the great winged bulls and lions, sculptured as statues, and graven on tablets.

Some of these join to the body of an ox the head of a man, or of an eagle; indeed, this *fourfold* union of animal forms, under much variety of detail, is everywhere apparent. So it was in Egypt. The great sphinx near Cairo has the body of a lion with a human head, and hundreds of similar figures lined the avenues of approach to the ancient temples of the gods.

There can be no doubt that these composite figures were intended as *symbols of the divine attributes*. The popular idea that they represent an order of angels called *cherubs* (Hebrew, *cherubim*), is probably incorrect. If they were designed to represent any really existing beings, their use would seem to have been forbidden by the second commandment; certainly they could have had no place among the temple furniture. As *symbolic* figures only, representatives of *ideas*, could they have been tolerated. Those ideas may be *intelligence*, as suggested by the human face; *strength and majesty* by that of the lion, *patience* by that of the ox, and *swiftness* by that of the eagle. In other words, to generalize the idea, they stand as the recognized symbol of the wisdom, power, eternity, and omniscience of God.

In the sculptures of Nineveh these composite figures stand as guardians of the palace and of the sovereign. The very word with which we are familiar, "cherub" (*kirub*), is applied to

them, derived from a root signifying to be strong. "With the Chaldeo-Assyrians," says Lenormant, "from the tenth to the fifth century before our era, the *kirub*, whose name is identical with the Hebrew 'kerub,' was the winged bull with a human head."

Taking this, then, as the approximate idea intended to be conveyed by this remarkable symbol, we have no great difficulty in discerning its significance in the various places where it is mentioned in the Scriptures. When God drove Adam and Eve out of Eden for their sin, it is said (Gen. iii. 24) that "he set the cherubim with flaming sword, to keep the way of the tree of life." That is, as we are inclined to think, not to bar their return thither upon any possible conditions, but to guard it *for them* till the way should be open through the blood of the atoning Lamb of God. They were, in reality, therefore, symbols of mercy, not of wrath; pledges to the sinning pair, and through them to all their descendants, that God would provide for them a way of salvation. For this reason, apparently, golden figures of these symbols were placed upon the mercy-seat of the ark, and embroidered upon the curtains of the tabernacle, and afterwards set in carved statuary in the temple, to encourage worshipers with the promise of acceptance. So in the vision of Ezekiel they appear as a vehicle

(*merkabh*) on which the divine glory was upborne, the same idea being represented as in the other cases, that the Lord was a God of mercy, and that all his manifestations to men were for the promotion of their salvation.

In this view of the nature of these mysterious beings, we obtain a glimpse of the reason why they were associated with the appearance of God himself in heaven. Heretofore, in all the past ages of the world they had been the symbols of salvation promised; they are seen here as the symbols of salvation bestowed. As such, they are so closely identified with the redeemed that they even participate in praise for redemption, leading the elders and the saints in the "new song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," etc. Chapter v. 9, 10.

The positions of these Living Ones were probably on the four sides of the throne, one directly in front, described as "in the midst of the throne," one on either side, and the fourth in the rear, all probably looking *outward*. Nothing is said of their bodies, but the usual opinion is that these were of the form of the ox, and extended inward, *under* and *upholding the throne*. Compare Ezek. i. 23, 26.

In a circle around the throne, apparently on a lower elevation, were twenty-four inferior thrones, occupied by as many *Elders*, figures of saintly

and venerable men, arrayed in the white robes of holiness, and wearing golden crowns. They were, doubtless, representatives of the universal church of the redeemed — the number twenty-four being derived from the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles.

Within this circle and directly before the throne were seven burning *Lamps*, corresponding to the seven-branched candlestick of the temple, symbolical of “the Seven Spirits of God”; i.e., says Alford, “the Holy Spirit in his seven-fold working; in his enlightening and cheering, as well as his purifying and consuming agency.” Thus interpreted, and taking into view the Lamb, mentioned in the next chapter, we have the Divine Three, the Blessed Trinity.

THE BOOK OF THE FUTURE.

CHAPTER V. (1) And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals. (2) And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? (3) And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look thereon. (4) And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look thereon:

Gazing intently on the august scene disclosed to him in heaven, the seer beholds in the right hand of Him who sits upon the throne a Book — the symbol of *futurity*. That it was held in his

right hand doubtless implies his absolute proprietorship and control of the future, the sole sovereignty of his providence over the things which were about to come to pass.

By the "book" we are to understand, of course, a *scroll*, i.e., a long sheet of parchment, papyrus, or other material used for writing, whose opposite ends were rolled upon two sticks in such a way that as one was unrolled the other was rolled up, the two sticks being held in the two hands at such a distance apart as to be convenient for reading the columns on the space between them. Books bound in our present manner—in many leaves, of which the edges on one hand are free, and on the other fastened together—were scarcely known in ancient times. This book was written on *both sides* of the sheet; a method not usual except when the amount of matter was very great. Probably this particular was mentioned as suggesting the abounding fullness of the divine purposes.

The book was "sealed with seven seals,"—the number seven, as usual, denoting completeness, or that it was *thoroughly* and effectively sealed. The manner in which these were affixed, probably, was that a seal was attached to each successive rolling of the sheet. Beginning with the left hand stick, suppose it rolled over once and then fastened in that position by a string upon whose

knot the wax of the seal was impressed; then rolled again, and another string and seal applied in a similar manner; and so on through seven rollings, thus completing the length of the sheet. Of course, when the book was opened the breaking of each seal successively would permit only so much of the scroll to be read as was held by that seal, the entire scroll being accessible only when the whole seven seals were loosed.

The view of this ample yet closely shut up volume of the divine purposes excites in the mind of the gazer the most intense interest. Whether its meaning was self-suggested by the appearance of the book, or was communicated by the Person who was showing him the vision is not stated; it is evident, however, that its real character was known to the apostle. Beneath those mystic seals were recorded the destinies of the suffering church of God; upon that involved scroll were delineated the pains and woes—did they contain, also, the deliverance and the victory?—of those who were passing through the martyr fires of persecution for Christ's sake. We cannot wonder that his desire to know the contents was very great.

As he gazes with intense solicitude, behold, a proclamation is made! A mighty angel, with a voice which reaches through the universe, calls for some one of sufficient worth—from his ex-

alted rank, his great achievements, or his superlative merits — to be entrusted with the office of penetrating and making known these secret counsels of the future respecting the church. No audible response is made, but the statement follows — as if after waiting for some one to offer himself, or after search was made for some one, — that “no man” (as it is in our version, but in the original “no *one*”) “in heaven nor in earth, nor under the earth” (Hades, the realm of the dead), these three being the customary Scripture phrase for the whole intelligent *universe*, was able to open the book or to look upon its contents. This occasions great grief to the apostle, as an apparent defeat of his hopes of learning about the future.

While lamenting this disappointment, one of the elders informs him that the book will be opened by the Lion of Judah, the Root-shoot of David, the well-known terms which designate the Messiah. At the same time he beholds, standing in the open space before the throne, a symbolic form representing the crucified Redeemer. Like the four Living creatures, it is one of those composite figures made up of symbols suggesting different ideas, the very incongruity of which shows that they are not to be taken literally. We shall find such figures abounding in this book. They were in accordance with oriental usage, as we see

so abundantly illustrated in the ancient sculptures of Egypt, Assyria, and India. Our severer occidental and modern taste discards them, and indeed finds it difficult even to understand them; hence one of the chief sources of perplexity in our day in interpreting a book like this.

THE SLAIN LAMB.

CHAPTER V. (5) And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome, to open the book and the seven seals thereof. (6) And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. (7) And he came, and he taketh *it* out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne. (8) And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

It is not certain whether this figure of the Slain Lamb had the animal form throughout, or whether the body except the head was of the human form. The acts of *taking* the scroll and *breaking* the seals seem necessarily to imply the use of hands, which, with some other things, would go to make the latter supposition most probable. The seven horns and the seven eyes are, of course, symbols of power and omniscience, the latter being, as it were, swift angelic messengers penetrating to every corner of the earth.

The figure bears the marks of one slain, perhaps the open wounds and trickling blood-drops caused by the crown of thorns, and the piercing by the soldier's spear.

The Lamb advances and receives the scroll from the hands of the enthroned One; after which follows the heavenly *song of redemption*.

THE SONG OF REDEMPTION.

CHAPTER V. (8) And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. (9) And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood *men* of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, (10) and madest them *to be* unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth. (11) And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; (12) saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing. (13) And every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, *be* the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever. (14) And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshiped.

The songs which are scattered through this book are among its most interesting features.

Apart from the general idea that all God's works are to be made occasions for praise, they serve, dramatically, to enliven the composition and impart variety. In the fifth chapter there is given us what we may call the *Song of Creation*. The four Living Ones, symbols of the divine attributes in the created universe, lead in the worship, and the elders, representatives of the church, follow responsively ascribing, "glory, and honor, and power, for thou hast created all things and for thy pleasure they are and were created." In this chapter the chorus is wider, the song more fervent. The Living Ones, as before, are the leaders; the elders, with harps and incense, the symbol of the prayers of the saints, follow. They sing "a new song" — new because later than the ancient universal song of creation — saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us (the best manuscripts omit the word *us*, removing the supposed difficulty of the Living Creatures participating in this ascription), to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us (rather *them*, i.e., redeemed men) kings and priests; and we (rather they) reign on the earth." Says Dean Alford, "The present tense of the verb *to reign* is not to be rendered as a future, but keeps its own meaning, the whole aspect and

reference of this heavenly vision being *not future* but *present*; the world and church as now existing. Compare Eph. ii. 6. The church even now, in Christ her head reigns on the earth; all things are being put under her feet as under his; and even if this meaning be questioned, we have her kingly rank and office asserted in the present, even in the midst of persecution and contempt."

The angelic hosts, in shining circles about the throne and the Living Ones and the elders, join in the new song with a seven-fold ascription of praise and worship to the Lamb. Finally, "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea"—a circumstantial enumeration embracing the entire sentient universe—respond in equal and joint adoration of Him that sat on the throne and of the Lamb, to which again the Living Ones answer "Amen"; and the elders fall down and worship in silent adoration.

It is impossible for the mind to conceive of anything more sublime than this. These were the honors paid to Him who had once been despised and rejected of men, and in whom many affect still to see only a man like ourselves—the most eminent individual, indeed, of the race, but still one having a human nature only, to whom it is as improper to offer real worship as to any other finite creature. How cheering such a vision

must have been to the apostle we can but imagine. If the Lord whom he served was thus worshiped in heaven, he was worthy of the highest confidence of his people on earth. If it was *his* church that was persecuted by Jew and pagan, it was a persecution that need not be feared. The representatives of that church were enthroned within the innermost circles of heaven, nearest the throne of God, and they might feel that the sympathies and the help of all the holy universe were forever theirs.

THE OPENING OF THE SEALS.

Hitherto the contents of this book have been chiefly preparatory; we now come to what is strictly prophetic. I may add, also, that here begin the real difficulties of interpretation. Up to this point commentators, however greatly they may differ as to the subsequent portions, are in the main agreed.

Are there any reliable guides to our path as we attempt to enter the obscure mazes before us? It would perhaps be presumptuous to say that there are, much more to affirm that we can always apply them with perfect assurance. We think, however, that we may name *three*, which will greatly aid us in our task, at least will be much safer than that fanciful conjecture which has seemed so often to be the only rule that was fol-

lowed. The first is, the express declaration of the first verse of the book that it was to relate to "*things which must shortly come to pass.*" The second is, *the analogy of other Scriptures* of a similar character. It will be seen, as we go on, that the apostle has directly or indirectly referred to or imitated the language of many other of the sacred writers, of which one conspicuous example is the city of the New Jerusalem, so much resembling Ezekiel's vision of the new temple, and another the vision of the four horses in this chapter, similar to that in Zechariah, Chapter vi. These earlier passages often throw much light on the corresponding ones in this book. The third is the *actual history of the times* covered by these predictions. We shall endeavor, in the suggestions we make, to follow very carefully the indications furnished us by these three guides.

CHAPTER VI. (1) And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, Come.

Gazing still through the opened skies above him, the seer beholds the Lamb breaking one of the seals of the scroll, and at the same time one of the Living Ones cries with a voice like thunder, "Come!" The most reliable Greek manuscripts omit the words added in our common version, "and see." Various suggestions as to the import of this command have been given. On the whole,

we think the ancient one most probable, that it was a summons to the apostle, as representing the church below, to draw near and behold what should be disclosed. This would be a most effective mode of impressing on his mind the magnitude of the events about to be shown.

THE FIRST SEAL.

CHAPTER VI. (2) And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon had a bow; and there was given unto him a crown; and he came forth conquering, and to conquer

He looked, and behold, pictured on the open scroll a white horse, bearing an armed warrior. To him was given a crown in token of victories won, and he dashed forward on his steed to achieve yet more. We understand by this symbol a victorious LEADER of the Lord's host, implying that the woes which are to be inflicted on his enemies are to be marshaled and directed with skill, and are to achieve the purpose for which they are sent.

THE SECOND SEAL.

CHAPTER VI. (3) And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, Come. (4) And another *horse* came forth, a red horse: and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

The second seal is broken, and another call

from one of the Living Ones summons the apostle to look. On the second page of the scroll is pictured a red horse (the color of blood) bearing another rider. A commission is given to him "to take peace from the land," and a mighty sword with which to execute it. Plainly this is WAR, divinely appointed, irresistible. We have here, too, a first glimpse of the place where it was to be, in the words, "the earth," or *land*. This expression in the New Testament almost always means "*the* land, by eminence," i.e., the holy land, the land of Palestine. The commission of this armed horseman, to "take peace from the *land*," would suggest to John's Christian readers that Palestine was to be scourged with desolating war. Our readers will please remember, unless otherwise indicated, that such is the usual meaning of "the earth" in this book.

THE THIRD SEAL.

CHAPTER VI. (5) And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a black horse; and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand. (6) And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not.

The third seal is broken like the others, and the third page of the scroll shows a black horse, whose rider holds aloft a balance for careful

weighing. To aid in reading the meaning of this symbol, a voice from among the Living Ones is heard crying, "A chœnix of wheat for a denarius, and three chœnixes of barley for a denarius, and the oil and the wine do not injure." A chœnix was a Greek measure of a little less than a quart. A denarius (translated a penny) was equivalent to about fourteen cents. It was the ordinary price of a day's labor. Compare Matt. xx. 2. Such a price for such a quantity of wheat or barley would be enormously high, and suggests at once the idea of FAMINE. The command not to hurt the oil and wine, both of which were important articles of food in the East, seems to imply a compassionate regard for those who were reduced to so scanty a supply of bread. It may indicate also to the people the need of great care and saving, that, so to speak, every olive and every grape should be preserved from waste. The color of this third horse, and the balances in the hand of its rider, as if food was so precious that it must be weighed out like gold, in like manner suggest a state of famine.

THE FOURTH SEAL.

CHAPTER VI. (7) And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come. (8) And I saw, and behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the

fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

The breaking of the fourth seal discloses a yet more frightful scene. It is a *pale* horse, i. e., the cadaverous hue of a corpse. His rider was *Death* himself, and in his train followed the ghastly hosts of *Hades*, the underworld of the dead. He, too, had a commission given him, — “to kill with sword (war), hunger (famine), death (pestilence)*, and wild beasts,” the last a scourge which was wont to come upon a land that had been depopulated and turned into a wilderness. The extent of this commission “was over the fourth part of the land,” — not the whole, for that would be utter extermination. We have here a symbol of those multiform woes, collectively and emphatically called DEATH, which come upon a land made to feel the horrors of subjugation by a merciless enemy.

THE FIFTH SEAL.

CHAPTER VI. (9) And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: (10) and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? (11) And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a

* Compare the name that used to be given in Europe to the plague, “the black death.”

little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, which should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled.

At the opening of the fifth seal, the inviting voice from the Living Ones to the seer is withheld, for each of them has called to him once in succession. The scroll now shows him on its mystic page a likeness of the great brazen altar in the temple at Jerusalem, at the foot of which were wont to be laid the dead bodies of the animals that were to be offered there in sacrifice. At the foot of this heavenly altar lay bleeding the souls of the martyrs who had been slain for their faith and their testimony for the truth. These were crying for divine justice to be administered upon the people of the land, for the avenging of their deaths and the vindication of the cause for which they had died. They were, however, bidden to wait patiently a little while until the full number of the martyrs should be completed, and in the meantime were themselves arrayed in the white robes of holiness and kingly dignity, in token of their own acceptance with God.

We have now got far enough on in this wondrous vision to begin to see the relation of the parts to each other, and the significance of the whole. We may here profitably bring in our three guides to help us in its interpretation

What land, then, was it, which had been guilty of persecuting the saints of the Lord — making as it were holocausts of them on the altar of their faith — and for the punishment of which were impending over it God's devastating army, *War*, *Famine*, and *Death* in a thousand hideous forms, — a retribution in all its immeasurable horrors which was then "shortly to come to pass"? Can there be any doubt as to what the answer is? — the land of *Palestine*, the apostate nation which had rejected and put to death their own Messiah, murdered his saints, and upon whom was now about to come "all the righteous blood shed upon the land, from the days of righteous Abel," and to whom Christ himself had declared, "Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon *this generation*." Matt. xxiii. 36.

It is important to remember that the chief source of all the prophecies respecting the coming of the Lord and the fall of Jerusalem, is his own great discourse on the mount of Olives. It is a remarkable fact that while of the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke record this discourse with more or less fullness, John, the only one who personally heard it, seems to have wholly omitted it. But what if it shall appear that instead of a comparatively brief space devoted to it in his Gospel, this evangelist has made it one of the two chief themes of this book of the Revelation?

Dean Alford remarks, "The close connection between our Lord's prophetic discourse on the mount of Olives and the line of apocalyptic prophecy cannot fail to have struck every student of Scripture." Thus, Matt. xxiv. 7, predicts war, famine, and pestilence, the parallels of which in Rev. vi. 2-8, are the red, the black, and the pale horses, with their riders. Matt. xxiv. 9, 10, describe fierce enmities and persecutions; Rev. vi. 9-11, the martyrs who were slain in those persecutions. Matt. xxvi. 29, 30, predict the celestial phenomena that were customarily used by the prophets to presage the destruction of wicked cities and nations; Rev. vi. 12, 13, give its exact counterpart. Matt. xxiv. 21, tells of the "great tribulation" which was to be visited upon the land; Rev. vi. 15, 17, the wailings of those who suffered under it. Matt. xxiv. 31, describes the gathering of the elect out of the midst of those woes; Rev. vii. 1-8, portray the sealing of the servants of God, that they might not be hurt by them (see Chap. ix. 4). Matt. xxv. 31, describes Christ coming to assume his kingdom and throne, and to judge all nations; Rev. xi. 15-18, announce the same thing, and give the song of the elders in view of the grand consummation. Thus each of the seven seals in the latter book answers exactly to a particular portion of the prophecy of the former book, and both correspond with wonderful

fidelity to the events which we know from history actually took place before the destruction of Jerusalem. Here, then, we have all three of the "guides" we specified as helpers in the interpretation of the book, agreeing in the application we have given it. We do not see how any thoughtful and impartial mind can fail to assent to it as the true one.

THE SIXTH SEAL.

CHAPTER VI. (12) And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; (13) and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs, when she is shaken of a great wind. (14) And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. (15) And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; (16) and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: (17) for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?

At the opening of the sixth seal there were disclosed to the eyes of the gazing apostle those dread phenomena — signs in heaven and on earth — which the prophets were wont to use as precursors of God's judgments on the enemies of his people. The sun and moon are eclipsed; an appalling star-shower occurs; dark thunder clouds

in dreadful rolling masses snatch away the sky; and an earthquake displaces mountains and islands from their solid foundations. We ask the reader to take his Bible and turn to the following passages in the prophets, to see what was the usual way of describing the calamities which were threatened upon the ancient enemies of God's people. We will cite a single one as a sample. Isa. xiii. 9-16, "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. . . . Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger," etc. This is the prophetic description of the fall of Babylon in that night when Cyrus marched his troops through the drained bed of the river into the city, and Belshazzar, its impious monarch, was slain. Compare Dan. v. 30. In Isa. xxiv. 1, 19-23, is a prediction of the earlier devastation of Palestine and Jerusalem by Sennacherib. In Isa. xxxiv. 4, 5, 9, 10, is a terrific prophecy of God's judgments on the land of Idumea. Let the reader compare it with Rev. vi. 14; also with 2 Peter

iii. 10, 12, and say whether in view of such a precedent it is presumptuous to understand both these passages as in like manner pronouncing an equal infliction upon Palestine and Jerusalem. In Ezekiel xxxii. 7, 8, is a prediction of woe upon Egypt. In Joel ii. 10, the description of a threatened plague of locusts. See also Ps. xlv. 6; Nahum i. 6.

We cannot doubt that all this imagery was symbolical, and was not designed to have a literal fulfillment in a physical sense. And yet it is a very curious and striking fact that Josephus, who probably never heard of the Apocalypse, affirms that supernatural events resembling these did occur in great numbers immediately before the fall of Jerusalem. "There was," he says, "a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet that continued a whole year." "At the ninth hour of the night so great a light shone around the altar and the holy house that it appeared to be bright daytime, which light lasted half an hour." The great eastern gate of the temple, which was of brass, so heavy that it took twenty men to move it, and which was deeply bolted into the solid stone floor, swung open of its own accord in the night. Before sunset, one day, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about in the clouds, as if besieging cities. The priests, as they went by night

into the inner court of the temple, "felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a multitude saying, "LET US REMOVE HENCE!" How much of reality there was in all these prodigies, and how much was the product of excited imagination under the accumulation of horrors, no one can say; but they do show how such things were coupled in men's minds with the fatal hour of the city's destruction, and of the divine judgments upon a people who had become ripe for ruin.

The last three verses of this chapter describe the terror which the anticipation of God's judgments awoke in the minds of the doomed inhabitants. The original word for "kings" was often used in a wide sense to denote rulers of every kind. The call upon the mountains and the rocks to fall upon them is borrowed from Hosea x. 8, where a similar prediction against apostate Israel is recorded. This language, like the "signs" in the heavens, is doubtless figurative, designed simply as a vivid portrayal of the universal terror, yet like that it did receive an apparently literal fulfillment of the most striking kind. During the siege many hundreds fled into the vast caverns underneath the city, whence the stone had been quarried for building, and which remain to this day. "The Romans," says Josephus, "found slain there above two thousand per-

sons, partly by their own hands, and partly by one another, but chiefly destroyed by the famine." Besides the slain, many were taken captive there, among them John and Simon, two of the leading chiefs of the revolt against the Romans, and of the most desperate fighters in the siege. They had literally fled for refuge into the cavities of the mountain and the rocks to hide themselves from the swords of the infuriated victors. See Josephus, War, Book 6, Chapter IX.

THE SEALING.

CHAPTER VII. (1) After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth, or on the sea, or upon any tree. (2) And I saw another angel ascend from the sunrising, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a great voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, (4) saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.

The terrific phenomena, described in the preceding chapter, indicated a tempest of divine wrath that was about to come upon the guilty persecutors of the saints. We should naturally expect to see the bursting and the ravages of this tempest upon the land in this chapter. Instead of this it opens with a most suggestive picture, or scene of mercy, — for we are to bear in mind that these visions are what was *seen* written or depicted on the seven-sealed scroll, accompanied

sometimes by spoken words of explanation, and interspersed with interludes of praise and song.

Four angels stand at the four corners of the earth, i.e., the *land* of Palestine, *holding in*—as one would rein back a furious steed that panted for the race—the four winds of the land, i.e., those appointed for the devastation of the land, that they should not blow upon the land or the waters or the vegetation. *Four* winds imply *all* the winds, or winds from every quarter. Compare Ezek. xxxvii. 9; vii. 2; xi. 4; Matt. xxiv. 31. For some reason there is a temporary arrest and postponement of the storm. For what reason, and to effect what purpose?

We find the answer in Matt. xxiv. 22, — “Except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved; but *for the elect’s sake*, those days shall be shortened.” Let it be remembered that this book, in this portion of it, is regarded by our best commentators as St. John’s mode of reporting Christ’s great prediction on the mount of Olives, or rather as an independent revelation given to him of the same things, and therefore parallel with it in its scope. The “tribulation” coming upon the land, says Matthew, would be so severe that but for God’s merciful interposition to abridge its duration, not a person would survive. But there were in that guilty nation some good men. Simeon and Anna and Joseph of Arima-

thea and Zacharias and others of whom these are representatives but whose names are now unknown — “a remnant according to the election of grace,” as Paul calls them (Rom. xi. 5) — were devout persons. In a generation of unparalleled wickedness there was a handful of God’s saints, the true spiritual Israel, whom God loved both for their own and their fathers’ sakes. These, like righteous Lot, should not perish in the destruction that was about to come. Besides these, there were the Christian believers, — all of them at this period Jews; they too must be snatched from the ruin that was to sweep over the devoted nation. All these, the devout of the two dispensations, are in covenant with God as his own dear children, and now the sheltering wing of his protection shall be thrown over them. Hence his strong angels are sent to hold in the impatient and foaming wind-steeds of vengeance, till divine mercy may provide for the safety of the elect.

To enhance the impressiveness of this interposition of mercy, and to link it in grateful association with memorable deliverances in earlier times, it is drawn up under the figure of a *sealing*. As on that awful night when the chastising angel was to go through the land of Egypt and destroy the first-born of every home, the dash of blood on the door-posts of the Hebrews was a seal to notify him to *pass over* their houses (Ex. xii. 22,

23), and as when God would bring destruction upon Judah for its idolatry, he showed to Ezekiel a messenger, with an ink-horn by his side, commissioned to go through Jerusalem, and set "a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sighed and cried for all the abominations that were done in the midst of it," and a squadron of angels with drawn swords to follow him, and slay every one, old and young, *that had not the mark* (Ezek. ix. 4-6), so now, God's people should be *sealed* as a token of protection under the impending storm. It is hardly necessary to ask what this mark was. Some commentators think it was baptism, the sign of discipleship; others suggest still more fanciful interpretations. Too much explanation of such unimportant particulars, however, detracts from the impressiveness of the description as a whole, just as a too elaborate realism in interpreting every point of costume or scenery in a picture detracts from the general effect of the picture.

In this view of the nature of the scene that follows, its import becomes very clear. An angel bearing God's seal comes from the east, crying with a loud voice that all the universe may hear, God's purpose of mercy, bidding the angels of the winds to withhold their fury, till the servants of God are sealed. Why he comes from the east is another unimportant touch of the description, possibly so said because all who came into the

temple courts at Jerusalem, and approached before the symbol of God's presence, had to enter from the east.

CHAPTER VII. (4) And I heard the number of them which were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel.

(5) Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand:

(6) Of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand:

(7) Of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand:

(8) Of the tribe of Zebulon twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Benjamin *were* sealed twelve thousand.

The particulars of the sealing are related with a formality and an exact specification of figures which forbid of its being taken as a literal transaction. In the apostle's time the tribal divisions of Palestine and its inhabitants did not exist, having been mostly obliterated by the sweeping devastation of the Babylonian captivity. Still, individual Jews carefully preserved their genealogical records, and of course knew to what tribes they belonged; so that the nation as a whole was often designated as the "twelve tribes." Compare Matt. xxiv. 30; Acts xxvii. 4; James i. 1. A close inspection of the list of the tribes here given shows some peculiarities. *Dan* is wholly

omitted,—why is unknown. It has been suggested that it was because this tribe, located in the near neighborhood of the Philistines on the sea coast, was early corrupted by them, and became wholly idolatrous, in consequence of which it ceased to be mentioned as one of Jacob's family. *Ephraim* is also omitted, perhaps because of its great wickedness, it having been prominent in the revolt of the ten tribes, and its chief city, Samaria, having been the capital of the rival kingdom of Israel. Probably, the tribe of *Joseph* is named in place of it, Joseph having been the father of Ephraim and Manasseh, and of course ancestor of both those tribes. To make out the full number of twelve, the tribe of *Levi* is mentioned, contrary to ancient usage. Levi was the sacred tribe, to which no territorial domain was assigned. It will be remembered that there were in the fixed constitution of the Hebrews really *thirteen* tribes; Levi not counted as one, and Joseph subdivided into Ephraim and Manasseh, counting as two.

Why the exact number of twelve thousand was sealed from each tribe, and why the numbers from all the tribes were equal, we cannot say. Of course it cannot be supposed to represent the actual number of the pious then to be found in each. It has been conjectured, however, that the whole number, one hundred and forty-four thou-

sand, may not differ very widely from the real number of Christians dwelling in Palestine at that time. Some years before this they were stated to be "many thousands" (the original is "many *myriads*," or *ten thousand*), Acts xxi. 20. We do not suppose, however, that the figures were meant to be taken literally. It is sufficient for the general purposes of the representation to show that there were many faithful followers of the Lord, and that all these were carefully marked by him as the objects of his loving care and safe protection. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, 'The Lord knoweth them that are his.'"

THE SONG OF DELIVERANCE.

CHAPTER VII. (9) After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and of *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; (10) and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb. (11) And all the angels were standing round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, saying, Amen: (12) Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. (13) And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, These which are arrayed in the white robes, who are they, and whence came they? (14) And I say unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which come out of the great tribulation, and they washed

their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (15) Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them. (16) They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: (17) for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.

When the sealing is completed, a song of praise for the promised deliverance is heard throughout heaven. It is the song of the *Gentile martyrs*, in fraternal sympathy and joy offering thanksgiving for their brethren of the twelve tribes. They are of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues. Their song is, "Salvation to our God," etc. Greek, *The* salvation, referring to the deliverance revealed in this scene for God's people. It comes from Him that sitteth on the throne and the Lamb. The angels and the elders, and the Living Ones join in the seven-fold ascription.

And as those white-robed multitudes are now soon to be brought into view in the second part of the book, the attention of the seer is particularly directed to them by the question, "Who are these?" The explanation following leaves us no doubt of their character, and gives us in the beautiful language, quoted in part from Isaiah xxv. 8; lviii. 11; lxx., the glorious rewards assured to all those who remain faithful in persecution, and seal their fidelity with their blood.

THE SEVENTH SEAL.

CHAPTER VIII. (1) And when he opened the seventh seal, there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. (2) And I saw the seven angels which stand before God; and there were given unto them seven trumpets.

(3) And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

(4) And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. (5) And the angel taketh the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it upon the earth: and there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

(6) And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

The preceding chapter shows us all things ready for the execution of the divine judgments upon the oppressors of the church. The fierce winds of vengeance are held in by four mighty angels until the elect of all the devoted tribes are sealed for deliverance from the approaching ruin, followed by a general song of praise to God for his saving mercy. Everything, therefore, is prepared, and waiting only for the signal of the onset.

It is in this attitude of readiness and expectation that the eighth chapter opens. For "half an hour," i. e., a brief space, all heaven is shown in silent awe waiting to see what shall be done.

To render the scene more impressive, and to teach again that God's vindictory interposition in behalf of his people is vouchsafed to them in

answer to their prayers, a preliminary symbol is exhibited of those prayers with the answer returned to them. An angel-priest comes to the heavenly altar with a golden censer. It must be remembered that the celestial world opened to the apostle's view was shown in likeness to the temple at Jerusalem, which with its furniture and services were declared to be "patterns of things in the heavens." Heb. ix. 23. The angel fills his censer with fire from the altar, and scatters upon it "much incense"; then sets it upon the altar, that the sweet fumes may ascend before God, as an accompaniment of the prayers which the suffering saints had been offering for justice upon their foes. Chapter vi. 10. See the manner of burning incense in connection with prayer described in Luke i. 9, 10. The prayers of the martyrs thus presented before God find acceptance. The same censer of the angel, which had been the vessel for the sacrificial fire, is filled at the altar with punitive fire for the enemies. Compare Matt. iii. 11. It is then hurled violently down upon the guilty and doomed land, with a fearful accompaniment of "voices and thunders" (i. e., of loud, angry thunders) and lightnings and an earthquake.

And now for the onset! The general cast of the movement described is a *military* one. When a commander is about to make a charge upon the

enemy, he often divides his army into several battalions, which march successively into action. The signal for each to move is given by a trumpet. So in this case. The winds, the lightnings, hail, volcanic showers, a malignant blazing star, locusts from the pit, fire-breathing horsemen from beyond the Euphrates, and earthquakes, make up the seven-battalioned army of God that is now let loose upon the fated nation. By this subdivision of the last seal into seven successive parts, the final catastrophe is rendered far more effective, the several acts rising in intensity in a climax to the close.

THE FIRST TRUMPET.

CHAPTER VIII. (7) And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

Like an advance corps of archers, the skies discharge first a terrific shower of lightning and hail, the whole glaring with baleful crimson hues like blood. With remarkable flexibility of imagery, the figures here are taken from the ten plagues once visited upon oppressing Egypt, thus not only giving poetic effect, but bringing up in the most suggestive manner the fate of the ancient enemies of God's people. This artillery of the heavens,

unlike the plague of Egypt (Ex. ix. 22-26), destroyed but the *third* part of the land, its trees and its grass, leaving the other two parts to the devastations of the woes which are to succeed. This is one of those incidental touches which show the artistic skill of the composition.

THE SECOND TRUMPET.

CHAPTER VIII. (8) And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; (9) and there died the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, *even* they that had life; and the third part of the ships was destroyed.

This, too, is in a general way patterned after the second Egyptian plague, where the waters of the Nile were turned to blood. Ex. vii. 19-25. Here it is the sea only, but the immediate agent is a new and striking one; it is a burning mountain, i. e., a volcano, which vomits forth its floods of molten lava into the waters. Whether this is wholly an original conception of the writer, or whether reports of such eruptions from the ever active volcanoes of Hiera and Stromboli had reached Palestine, we cannot say. The image, however, either way, was sufficiently fearful, and indicated that the divine judgments would be visited upon both sea and land, so that there could be no escape from them. Of course, the turning of the waters into blood was in appear-

ance only, causing it to take on the dark purple hue which symbolized pestilence and death. So in describing an eclipse, the prophetic way of representation was to say the moon was "turned into blood." Acts ii. 20.

THE THIRD TRUMPET.

CHAPTER VIII. (10) And the third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters; (11) and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

There seems to be an intermingling of several images in the description of this attack; first, a lurid meteor from the skies, like some of those which have been seen in recent star-showers, especially in that of November, 1833, and which among uncultivated people have ever been objects of the greatest terror. Under a vivid personification this bore the name, "Wormwood," i. e., *Bitterness*. It falls upon the streams and fountains of the land, and turns them all into *Marahs* (compare Ex. xv. 23), so that the very waters, so essential to life, become fatal poisons. Could anything, in a land where fountains of water were so precious, be more terrible than this?

THE FOURTH TRUMPET.

CHAPTER VIII. (12) And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; that the third part of them should be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner.

The woes increase in severity; the very sources of day and light for man are attacked. The obscuration of the heavenly bodies is the well-known prophetic symbol of the destruction of guilty cities and nations, and was one of the "signs" expressly named by our Lord of the immediate overthrow of Jerusalem. Matt. xxiv. 29.

It is very important here to observe that it is not good exegesis to attempt to find an independent application for every minute particular in this succession of imagery. This is believed to have been one of the most common and prolific sources of difficulty in the interpretation of the book. Writers have vied with each other in trying to find the most meaning in every word. The annals of mediæval history have been ransacked to discover persons or events, civil, military or religious, to which they might be attributed, in the hope of disclosing the hidden mystery of the prophecy. It is as if one standing before a grand painting should fix on the minute strokes of the pencil used solely to give color and effect to the

main design, and expend his ingenuity in guessing what was the special meaning of the artist in them. Taken as a whole, the symbolism here employed seems very obvious, shadowing forth in this impressive manner those fearful judgments of distress, destruction, and death, which were about to fall upon Palestine and its chief city.

THE WOE TRUMPETS.

CHAPTER VIII. (13) And I saw, and I heard an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a great voice, Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound.

Hitherto the trumpets have signalled for afflictions upon inanimate nature mostly, and upon men only indirectly. The remaining three will be directed upon the guilty persecutors themselves. To prepare the mind for these, an eagle (in our version, an *angel*) is represented as flying through the heavenly sky, crying, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the land, for the trumpet-blasts of the three angels who are yet to sound!" In accordance with this, those three are usually designated as "the woe trumpets."

THE FIFTH TRUMPET.

CHAPTER IX. (1) And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven fallen unto the earth: and there was given to him the key of the pit of the abyss. (2) And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there went up a smoke

out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. (3) And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. (4) And it was said unto them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads. (5) And it was given them that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when it striketh a man. (6) And in those days men shall seek death, and shall in no wise find it; and they shall desire to die, and death fleeth from them. (7) And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared for war; and upon their heads as it were crowns like unto gold, and their faces were as men's faces. (8) And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as *the teeth* of lions. (9) And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to war. (10) And they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men five months. (11) They have over them as king the angel of the abyss: his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek *tongue* he hath the name Apollyon.

(12) The first Woe is past: behold, there come yet two Woes hereafter.

In predicting the calamities which were to come upon Palestine immediately before the destruction of Jerusalem, our Saviour had said, "Then shall be *great tribulation*, such as was not since the beginning of the world, no, nor ever shall be." Supposing, as the best commentators now do, that this portion of the Revelation was designed to cover the same ground with Matt.

xxiv., the question arises, . In what way could its author most vividly set forth in picture or symbol,—for this, as we have seen, is the characteristic method of this book,—the idea of this unparalleled woe?

To those familiar with the East there will at once occur the visitation of *locusts*, which so often desolate whole districts, bringing the entire population to the verge of starvation. The Hebrew contains no less than ten words which apply to this general class of insect pests, all of them significant of their characteristics, such as the *hopper*, the *eater*, the *rustler*, from the sounds emitted by their wings, the *darkener*, from the obscurations of the sky caused by their clouds, or in general, the *multitude*, from their inconceivable numbers. Instances, it is said, have occurred, where a single flock of locusts covered an area of five hundred miles in extent! Our own western country has of late had some similar experiences from the ravages of grasshoppers, though probably nothing equaling those of the East.

In selecting, then, a symbol of distress about to come upon the apostate land of the Jews, nothing could be more striking than a visitation of *locusts*. These had often been made the instruments of the divine chastisements upon wicked nations. They were the eighth of the plagues of Egypt, an ever significant example of the way in

which God punished the foes of his ancient people. Ex. x. 14, 15. One of the most memorable of these inflictions was that described by the prophet Joel (Chap. i. 6; ii. 1-11).

The day of the Lord cometh,
For it is nigh at hand;
A day of darkness and of gloominess,
A day of clouds and of thick darkness.
As the morning spread upon the mountains,
Cometh a great people and a strong;
There hath never been the like,
Neither shall be any more after it,
To the years of many generations.
A fire devoureth before them,
And behind them a flame burneth.
The land is as the garden of Eden before them,
And behind them a desolate wilderness,
Yea, and nothing shall escape them.
The appearance of them is as horses,
And as horsemen so shall they run;
Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains
shall they leap,
Like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the
stubble,
As a strong people set in battle array.
Before their face the people shall be much pained,
All faces shall gather blackness.
They shall run like mighty men,
They shall climb the wall like men of war,
And they shall march every one on his ways,
And they shall not break their ranks,
Neither shall one thrust another;
They shall walk every one in his path,
And when they fall upon the sword they shall not be
wounded.
They shall run to and fro in the city,

They shall run upon the wall,
They shall climb up upon the houses,
They shall enter in at the windows like a thief.
The earth shall quake before them,
The heavens shall tremble,
The sun and moon shall be dark,
And the stars shall withdraw their shining.
And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army,
For his camp is very great;
For he is strong that executeth his word.
For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible,
And who can abide it?

But the locusts now threatened upon Palestine shall be more terrible than those. The oriental insects come from the sands of Arabia and the South; these shall be the very offspring of *Hades*. An angel, blazing in light like a star, is sent down with a key to open the bottomless volcanic prison of the demons. From the smoke that issues forth, like the lurid sulphurous vapors of Vesuvius, swarm out the locusts of divine vengeance. Unlike the stingless insect that feeds on herbage, each locust is a scorpion, whose poison, not usually fatal, inflicts the most excruciating pain. Their very shape is as frightful as their venom. Their powerful legs suggest the figure of a rearing and plunging war-horse as he rushes into the charge. (The Italian name for the locust is *cavalletta*, the little steed). On their heads are crests with streaming hair, like the plumed helmets of the Grecian warriors; their faces are bold and

truculent, with projecting teeth like lions; their armor is like iron breast-plates, and their clashing wings, in flight, resemble the din of chariots rushing into battle. Behind them are long poison-tipped tails, twisted as in the attitude of striking. And to complete this wonderful picture, unlike real locusts which "have no king" (Prov. xxx. 27), and whose movements seem to be guided by chance or caprice, according to the direction of the wind or the supplies of food, these infernal locusts are marshaled under the orders of the Prince of Hell, Apollyon, the Destroyer, so as to make their attacks with system and concentration, and the relentless fury of Satan himself!

To the ravages of such a winged cavalry of the pit Palestine is to be surrendered five months! This specific time corresponds very nearly to the period usually occupied by the annual visitations of locusts, and also to that in which Palestine was being overrun by the conquering army of Titus (from March to August, A.D. 70). Their mission is not to hurt the grass, nor trees, nor any green thing, but only those *men* who have not been sealed as the friends of God and his church. Was ever a more terrific symbol of punishment conceived of or sketched in human language! We do not wonder that it is said that during that doomed five months "men should seek death and should not find it,

and should desire to die, and death should flee from them." Of course, the locusts were imaginary creatures, and it would miss the very object in view to look for any literal objects corresponding to them, or even any definite and particular tortures which may be supposed to be intended by them. Doubtless they are made up in the same general way as were so many monsters of the heathen mythology, the griffin, the centaur, the sphinx, the snaky head of Medusa, etc.; i. e., by blending in one figure the symbols of various qualities or characteristics. Even caricaturists resort to the same principle when they show men's heads on animal forms, and represent them performing acts literally impossible, but symbolically highly suggestive.

The meaning, then, of this remarkable imagery we take to be simply, as announced by Jesus himself, that before and at the final downfall of the city there should be throughout Palestine "*great tribulation*, such as had not been since the beginning of the world to that time, no, nor ever shall be." That it was, in that general sense, most abundantly fulfilled, we have the amplest evidence in Josephus.

THE SIXTH TRUMPET.

CHAPTER IX. (13) And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God, (14) one saying to the sixth angel, which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates. (15) And the four angels were loosed, which had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, that they should kill the third part of men. (16) And the number of the armies of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times ten thousand: I heard the number of them. (17) And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates as of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone: and the heads of the horses are as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceedeth fire and smoke and brimstone. (18) By these three plagues was the third part of men killed, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone, which proceedeth out of their mouths. (19) For the power of the horses is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails are like unto serpents, and have heads; and with them they do hurt. (20) And the rest of mankind, which were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk: (21) and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

This is the second *woe-trumpet*, and, as in the preceding cases, foretells a still increased severity of punishment, — the last one involving the *torture* of men (verse 5), this, their *death* (verse 18). It will be perceived that the whole series of trumpets is arranged in a climax, ever advancing from the less to the greater degree of suffering for the

guilty nation and people on whom was now to be visited "all the righteous blood shed upon the land." Matt. xxiii. 35.

We have seen that the source of the preceding agent of woe was one of the natural objects which had so often scourged the East, — locusts. The same thing is true in this case. For many centuries the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah had been subjected to invasion and plunder by the mighty nations of the East, especially Assyria and Babylon, — in other words, peoples *beyond the Euphrates*. Over and over again did these mixed peoples come in vast armies and carry off booty and captives; and finally they swept away the whole population, of Israel first (2 Kings xvii. 6), and of Judah some one hundred thirty years later (2 Kings xxv.). These visitations, as was notorious, were sent by God in punishment for the sins of the two kingdoms, and especially for the sin of idolatry, and all the abominable practices connected with it.

We see, then, how impressive it must be to announce another invasion upon the land by a mighty army from *beyond the Euphrates*. Not a *literal* invasion, just as the scourge of locusts was not a literal one, but a denunciation of *woe*, such as was caused by the actual invasions centuries before. Indeed, the very terms of the description would suggest that it was not literal, the

number of the horsemen, and the unnatural figures and qualities of the horses showing that, like the locusts, they were a symbolic host, imaging forth resistless, hopeless destruction.

Upon the blast of the sixth trumpet, a voice is heard from the golden altar of incense — implying that it is in answer to the prayers which had been offered there — commanding that the four angels which are bound in (rather *at*) the great river Euphrates should be let loose. The reader will at once recall the four angels who held back the winds (Chap. vii. 1) Here the angels themselves are in chains, implying that these are not God's good angels, waiting to do his will, but bad angels, *demons*, who in their infernal hate are eager to head the armies of a new invasion upon the once favored land. They had repeatedly done this before, but God in mercy had driven them back, and forbidden their crossing the Euphrates again, till the time came for a new chastisement by their means. This is what is meant by their being "prepared for an hour and a day and a month and a year." The original is, "for *the* hour, and *the* day," etc., the article being definite and emphatic, and its repetition pointing to some signal pre-appointed time, — whether shorter or longer, an hour or a year, — when they would be wanted for this purpose. It is added that they are let loose for the express purpose of destroying a third part of the population of the land.

This army was to consist, not of infantry and cavalry, as usual, but of cavalry alone. The Jews had never been much accustomed to horses,—indeed, they were peremptorily forbidden to “multiply” them (Deut. xvii. 16), and when captured from their enemies, they were generally slaughtered (2 Sam. viii. 4). Solomon, in this respect, as in many others, broke in upon the ancient customs, and procured many horses; and yet it may still be said that cavalry was not the usual military arm of the Jews, and that in the hands of their enemies it was an object of peculiar terror. The Assyrians and Babylonians, on the other hand, were expert horsemen, and their cavalry especially numerous and powerful. The buried sculptures of Nineveh and Babylon abound in spirited representations of the war steeds of their kings and nobles. To represent this army of punishment, then, as composed wholly of *horsemen*, would be peculiarly terrific. Much more, when their number was announced to the seer — “two hundred thousand thousand”—i.e., two hundred million! Of course, no literal army ever equaled that. Prof. Stuart suggests that it must have exceeded one quarter of the whole population of the globe at that time.

But this is not all. As the locusts were not such as were ever seen before, so with these horsemen. Their riders were clad in parti-colored ar-

mor—scarlet and purple and yellow—which in the sunlight would gleam with lurid flashes. The horses, with gnashing teeth and tossing manes, would look like lions, and their hot breath like emissions of lighted sulphur smoke, destroying men with the pestilential fumes. Nay, this is not enough. Not only do they kill with their teeth and their breath, but their tails, too, are every one Medusa heads, each hair a hissing, writhing serpent, with poisonous fangs, striking at all who come within their reach. Thus, whether they advance or retreat, the onset of these demoniac horses would be equally deadly. No wonder that the third part of the people of the land, swept by such an army under the lead of the very demons of destruction, perished.

We repeat it, these were not symbols of a real invasion from the East, but simply of *woes* which the land should suffer,—woes *as if* such an invasion should take place. We shall endeavor presently to show what the real source of this suffering was, when we exhibit the fulfillment of this whole series of trumpets.

What, now, will be the result of all these infictions? Will the guilty nation repent of its sins, or will they, like their fathers in the days of the wicked kings of Israel and Judah, persist in their iniquities? We know the verdict of history. No tragedy of the drama ever depicted

such a tale of crime and horror as the pages of Josephus, in describing the last days of the guilty city. So, too, reads the prophecy before us, written almost at the very time: "The rest of the men—those that did not perish outright—repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold and silver," etc. The cast of the description is doubtless still modeled after the forms of their earlier crimes,—for open and avowed idolatry was scarcely practiced in Judea at this time. As the scourge from the East did not cure the idolatry of their fathers, so this new scourge will not cure theirs. "Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts." All these and many more were crimes of that day. Josephus himself declares that there never was so wicked a people on the face of the earth as the Jews were at the time of their final overthrow.

THE ANGEL OF THE SECOND BOOK.

We are near the close of the catastrophe which has been so long impending. The first six seals of the scroll of prophecy have been opened, revealing to us the dread array of judgments which God had prepared for the persecutors of his people, the apostate and blood-stained nation who had crucified their Messiah, and had persecuted

his followers unto death. The seventh seal has been broken, and of its seven subdivisions, six parts have been fulfilled — four trumpets of devastation upon the land itself, and two woe-trumpets upon its inhabitants. One trumpet alone remains; it must introduce the supreme scene of all. All the righteous wrath of God, which symbol after symbol has threatened, is now to be completed; all the hopes which so many interventions and so many promises have inspired, are to be consummated. The final hour has come, and the mystery of God, — the secret purpose of his protecting love for his church, — is about to be finished!

And yet it is a hard thing, even for Divine Justice, to do. The doomed nation was once God's own dear people. "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him." Jer. xxxi. 20. How can the divine Father pronounce upon a child once so loved the sentence of utter destruction! What wonder that, unable, as it were, to utter that doom in words, he should give it to the seer in a little supplementary scroll by itself, not sealed up, for it is his purpose to have it known, and yet by vailing it in writing, sparing himself, if we may so express it, the pain of the spoken sentence! What wonder that when the seven-

fold voice of Justice uttered its thunders against the guilty reprobate, the same relenting mercy should forbid their words to be written down, but kept in sealed and solemn silence! And what wonder that when at last the execution falls (verse 19), the description is only in the vague terms of storm and tempest and earthquake, suggesting all that is fearful, but leaving to the imagination alone to depict the awful reality.

It is, we believe, in such general considerations of the reluctance with which God, as a Father, punishes the guilty, that we are to find the clew to this and the eleventh chapters. The imagery employed is the sublimest conceivable, and the effect of the whole upon the reader most deeply impressive.

CHAPTER X. (1) And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire; (2) and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth; (3) and he cried with a great voice, as a lion roareth: and when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices. (4) And when the seven thunders uttered *their voices*, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying, Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. (5) And the angel which I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven, (6) and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are

therein, that there shall be time no longer: (7) but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets. (8) And the voice which I heard from heaven, *I heard it* again speaking with me, and saying, Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel that standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. (9) And I went unto the angel, saying unto him that he should give me the little book. And he saith unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey. (10) And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter. (11) And they say unto me, Thou must prophesy again over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.

The position of the seer at the commencement of this chapter seems to be changed from what it had been. He had, in spirit, been in heaven; he is now apparently on the earth, since he represents the angel as *coming down* from heaven. This "mighty angel" is thought by most commentators to be the Lord Jesus Christ himself, both from the description given of him (compare Chapter i. 14-16), and from the fact that in Chap. xi. 3, he calls the persons mentioned, "*my witnesses.*" He also has the "little book" of prophecy, a prerogative which we are taught in Chap. v. 5, belongs to Christ alone. The expression, "clothed with a cloud," is one applicable only to a divine being, having probably been first derived from the mode of God's manifestation on Mount

Sinai. Ex. xix. 9, 16. Compare Ex. xxiv. 5; Lev. xvi. 2; 2 Sam. xxii. 12; Ps. xevii. 2; Matt. xxiv. 30; xxvi. 64.

It has been much questioned what precisely was represented by this *open little book*. Prof. Stuart was inclined to make it the symbol of the second portion of the Revelation, embraced in Chaps. xii.-xix. There are obvious objections to this, viz., why that portion of the prophecy—relating, as we suppose, to the chastisements appointed for persecuting Rome—should be of smaller importance and scope, as this diminutive term implies, than the preceding portion, symbolized by the seven-sealed volume of Chap. v. 1; why, also, this should be shown as open, i. e., unsealed, as if already fully made known to men. We incline, therefore, to the view of Cowles, and others, that this “little book represents only the as yet *unfulfilled* portion of the first book, or what is to be executed under the sounding of the seventh trumpet, now just at hand. It is *little* because containing only so small a fraction of the whole; it is *open* because the seventh seal under which it comes has been broken, and the very process of revealing its meaning is now going on. The whole is as much as to say, “All but *this* has now been accomplished. This is the very *last page*, written out by itself because the most weighty and appalling of all.”

This mighty angel plants one foot upon the sea and the other upon the land, as implying supreme dominion over both, i. e., over the whole earth, and therefore having all the powers of the earth waiting upon him to execute his commands. In this sublime attitude he speaks with a voice which reverberates from every part of the sky like sevenfold thunders. What he said is doubtless that which is recorded in verse 6, the report of the words being suspended for a moment for the mention of the response by the thunders. It is a striking peculiarity of the representation that these thundering echoes seem to repeat not only the cry of the angel, but some independent voices of their own, as if all the universe responded to the words of divine justice, expressing satisfaction at the speedy fulfillment of its purpose. These responses the prophet was about to write, when a voice from heaven forbade. Let silence rather than feeble human words suggest their meaning.

The all-penetrating voice of the angel-Messiah proclaims, with an adjuration by the Creator of the universe, that there shall be *no longer delay*. When the seventh trumpet shall sound, God's purpose as before revealed by the prophets respecting the vindication of his church and the punishment of its enemies shall be fulfilled. Nearly all recent commentators agree in this as

the meaning of the passage, which indeed is obvious on its very face. The idea that it is a proclamation that time absolute — the further continuance of the world and of human life — is about to cease, is wholly foreign to the connection, and inconsistent with what follows, which shows a long series of events in human history as yet to occur.

To emphasize the seer's reception of this prophecy, he is commanded to take the little book from the angel and *eat it*; i. e., to carefully read and consider its contents. This is in imitation of Ezekiel 3: 1-3, where the prophet was commanded to eat the roll of prophecy, and with like effect. Its sweetness and bitterness imply, of course, that the contents of the book were in some respects joyous, in others painful, — joyous, we may believe, as an assurance of the speedy deliverance of the suffering church; painful, in that it was to be obtained by the destruction of the city and temple and nation which John loved as his own with the fervent devotion which characterized all Jews.

There was then added an intimation that though this catastrophe was so near, he must not consider that his prophetic service was to be closed by it. Jerusalem, though the first, was not the only persecutor of the saints. Rome, too, was no less guilty, and there was a vista of proph-

ecy to open in disclosure of its overthrow and retribution. "Thou must prophesy again before (or concerning) many peoples and nations and tongues and kings," a phrase suggesting with the utmost accuracy the composite and heterogeneous character of the great Roman Empire, at that day the mistress of the world.

THE MEASUREMENT OF THE TEMPLE.

CHAPTER XI. (1) And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. (2) And the court which is without the temple leave without, and measure it not; for it hath been given unto the nations: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

This chapter is universally conceded to be one of the most difficult in the Apocalypse, not so much, it is believed, from its language as from our lack of a sufficiently minute acquaintance with the historical events to which it seems to refer. Our only trustworthy guide in seeking its meaning is to inquire carefully respecting the peculiar prophetic imagery of the Jewish Scriptures, and the occurrences connected with the siege and capture of Jerusalem.

We assume that the temple and altar and court here mentioned, and the city in which the two witnesses prophesied, were the literal temple, etc., at Jerusalem. Such is a first principle of inter-

pretation in all cases, unless something in the connection forbids. Here there is nothing of that kind; on the contrary, that understanding of it is in harmony with all that has gone before. Throughout the symbolism of the seals and trumpets we have been going steadily forward to the great catastrophe predicted by our Lord in Matt. xxiv. The preceding chapters have brought us to the very verge of that catastrophe, and everything is prepared now for its immediate consummation.

Our first inquiry, then, is as to the meaning of *measuring*, as a symbolic action. In Ezek. xl., of which we are strongly reminded by its resemblance to this place, it was used in describing the construction of the ideal temple. Evidently that use would be out of place here, for the temple is already built, and we are looking rather for a token of *destruction*. Generally, therefore, we find that it is so signified in the denunciatory language of the prophets against wicked nations. Thus, in Isa. xxviii. 17, "Judgment will I *lay to the line*, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies," etc. Ps. lx. 6, "I will divide Shechem, *and mete out* the valley of Succoth." 2 Kings xxi. 12, 13, "I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem *the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of*

Ahab." Amos vii. 8, 9, "Behold, I will set a *plumbline* in the midst of my people Israel: and the high places of Isaac shall be desolate," etc. Lam. ii. 7, 8, "The Lord hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary, he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces: *he hath stretched out a line*, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying, therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament." Isa. xxxiv. 11, "He shall stretch out upon it—Idumea—the *line of confusion*, and the stones of emptiness." It is clear, then, that prophetic use generally makes the act of measuring with a line or reed a symbol of chastisement. When the Lord thus applies the unerring standard of *rectitude* to a city, a land, or even to a people (compare 2 Sam. viii. 2), it is a sign that they are found wanting in his sight, as Belshazzar was when weighed in the balances, and doomed to speedy destruction.

To a Jew, then, no more significant symbol could be used to denote the utter apostasy and certain doom of the nation than to behold the angel-Messiah applying the test of righteousness to the temple itself, meaning here the very holy of holies, the sacred altar, and to those who pretended to worship God there. No language could more impressively suggest the utter corruption, wickedness, and apostasy of a people, when even

their most holy shrines were thus marked with the token of God's condemnation. The plaintive wail of Jeremiah over the devastation of the earlier temple by Nebuchadnezzar would seem to be heard again, "He hath stretched out a line — or measure — upon his temple; he hath abhorred his sanctuary; he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces."

Coupled with this direction to measure the temple and the altar was the command to cast out the outer court and not measure it, for it was given to the Gentiles. This outer court, we think, must be the well known exterior space surrounding the inner courts of the women, of Israel, and of the priests, and because open to the admission of persons of every class, usually called the court of the Gentiles. It extended around three sides of the temple area, was paved with marble, and at this date was covered along the inner face of the inclosing walls with a beautiful portico. It was here that the traffic in doves and the exchange of money, which our Lord on two occasions so severely reprehended, were carried on. Though a part of the sacred edifice, it had been "given to the Gentiles," and instead of the house of God was made a "house of merchandise," — the scene of avarice and intrigue, and every sort of selfish scheming. No need of applying the measuring reed to this to

test its character. Its crimes and corruptions were notorious, as far as Jerusalem was known. It had been "the court of the Gentiles"; let it be abandoned to them, and be no longer, even in name, a part of the house of the Lord.

"And the holy city they shall tread under foot forty and two months." The word *trample* fitly expresses the insolent abuse which is practiced upon a city and people by a cruel and exasperated conqueror. The period of time here mentioned accords almost literally with the duration of the Roman invasion up to the capture of the city. Nero appointed Vespasian general of the army that was to attack Judea in the first part of February, A.D. 67, and the city was taken August 10, A.D. 70, a space of almost exactly three and a half years, or forty-two months, or twelve hundred sixty days. It is true that the Romans were not all this time in the city itself; but they were in the land, burning and plundering, and making their way continuously towards that city, which, being the capital, might naturally be named for the entire province. This was in exact coincidence with what had been predicted by Christ himself, "They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be *trod*den down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Luke xxi. 24. Besides, the city itself during that

period was actually in the possession of a fierce horde of robbers—called by Josephus Zealots and Idumeans,—the latter a Gentile race who murdered and plundered at their will, inflicting miseries on the helpless inhabitants without a parallel in all the annals of war.

We find, thus, in the simple history of that most tragic period a literal fulfillment of the prophecy before us, which seems to disclose to us, with little danger of mistake, its so called mysterious meaning. It is substantially the view taken of the passage by Meyer, Macdonald, and others among distinguished recent commentators. Profs. Stuart and Cowles give a somewhat different idea of the measuring, supposing it to signify the *preservation* of the sanctuary and the altar, not, however, of the literal temple, for these were in fact utterly demolished with the rest of the building, but as representatives of the interior essence or fundamental principles of the ancient religion, which being the same in both systems were not intended utterly to perish. They find, however, the fulfillment of the passage at the same time we have indicated, at the siege and capture of the city, as they do also that of the prophesying of the two witnesses described in the verses following.

THE TWO WITNESSES.

CHAPTER XI. (3) And I will give unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and three-score days, clothed in sackcloth. (4) These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, standing before the Lord of the earth. (5) And if any man desireth to hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man shall desire to hurt them, in this manner must he be killed. (6) These have the power to shut the heaven, that it rain not during the days of their prophecy: and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire. (7) And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them. (8) And their dead bodies *lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. (9) And from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations do *men* look upon their dead bodies three days and a half, and suffer not their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. (10) And they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and make merry; and they shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth. (11) And after the three days and a half the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which beheld them. (12) And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they went up into heaven in the cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

More difficult, if possible, than that of the measurement of the temple, has been the interpretation of the ten verses of this chapter which relate to the *two witnesses*. A bare list of the guesses (for they have been nothing more) as to

what was meant by them, would fill pages. It would be presumptuous for us, of course, in such circumstances, to pretend to any certainty of opinion on the subject; we merely crave the liberty to present our guess also, leaving to our readers to judge of it as it shall commend itself to their good sense, or otherwise.

Glancing over the passage we gather the following seven things which are said of these witnesses:—

1. They are *Christ's* witnesses. Verse 3.

2. The period of their testimony is one thousand two hundred and sixty days, or three and one-half *years*. (The ancients used to reckon three hundred and sixty days to a year.)

3. They are clothed in sackcloth; i. e., their message is one of *woe*.

4. They correspond to the *two olive trees* and the *two candlesticks* in Zech. iv. 11-14. Verse 4.

5. They have *miraculous* powers. Verses 5, 6.

6. They are martyred, and after death subjected to ignominy in the streets of Jerusalem. Verses 7-10.

7. After three and one-half days they arise from the dead, and visibly ascend to heaven.

The first question which presents itself is, Were these witnesses literal or symbolical persons? The former, we should say, unless something in the connection forbids. Such is one of the

first principles of interpretation. The language, as a whole, looks as if real persons were intended. Taken figuratively, as meaning, for instance, the Old and New Testaments, as some have conjectured, the description seems incongruous and unnatural. Besides, a literal interpretation is in keeping with that which we have hitherto advocated in the application of the prophecy. If the retributive overthrow of apostate Jerusalem is the subject matter under consideration, and now immediately imminent, why should we not look for these witnesses, their testimony, martyrdom, and resurrection among the persons and events which were crowded so thickly into that stupendous tragedy?

What persons were there, then, at that time, to which the seven things above mentioned could be applied?

One class only can we think of as answering this inquiry, the *apostles*. They were expressly appointed to be Christ's witnesses. Luke xxiv. 48; Acts i. 8, 22; ii. 32; iii. 15; v. 32; x. 39, 41, xiii. 31; xxii. 15; xxvi. 16; 1 Pet. v. 1. They had miraculous powers. Mark xvi. 17-20. They all, with perhaps the exception of John, suffered martyrdom.

But the witnesses here mentioned were only *two* in number. What *two apostles*, then, lived at that time, and could have performed and suffered what is here described?

One of them can be readily and with the utmost probability named, ST. JAMES, "the Lord's brother" (Gal. i. 19). He is believed to have been a younger son of Joseph and Mary (Mark vi. 3); was the first bishop of the church at Jerusalem, and (Acts xv. 13) so eminent for his piety and sanctity that he was commonly styled "the Just." How faithfully he testified to his countrymen in those degenerate times may be seen in his epistle, Jas. iv. 5. He, too, especially warned his people of the immediate coming (Parousia) of the Lord to punish that wicked generation. Jas. v. 7, 8. Josephus expressly says that he was put to death by stoning, at the instigation of the high priest Ananus (Ant. xx. 9, 1). Hegesippus, a Christian historian of the second century, gives much fuller particulars of his martyrdom, and declares that the Jews themselves regarded the siege of the city as a punishment from heaven for putting to death so good a man. See Alford, Vol. IV., pp. 97, 98.

The other witness, there is good reason to believe, was ST. PETER. We know that three years after Paul's conversion Peter and James were residing at Jerusalem, and apparently the only apostles there. Gal. i. 19. Fourteen years afterward the same thing was apparently true, except that John was there also. This was as late as A.D. 50, some twenty years after the ascension.

Nothing subsequent is positively known of his life or residence. Tradition reports him to have labored for a time in the regions of the East, and some have inferred from 1 Pet. v. 13, that his first epistle was written from Babylon. It is well known, also, that the Roman church claims that Peter was the first bishop of Rome, and was martyred there at the same time with Paul, by the order of the emperor Nero. Most Protestant scholars, however, reject this tradition, so far, at least, as relates to his residence at Rome, though conceding the probability that he suffered martyrdom under Nero. Dean Alford, after discussing the subject at length, comes to the following conclusion: "That the apostle visited Rome, and suffered martyrdom there, we would fain believe as the testimony of Christian antiquity. *It is difficult to believe it*, difficult to assign the time so as to satisfy its requisitions; but in *the uncertainty which rests over all the later movements of the great apostles*, it would be presumptuous for us to pronounce it impossible." Vol. IV., p. 131.

In other words, nothing positive is known on the subject. Why the Roman church should cling to the traditions which give it the honor of having had him for its founder and martyr is obvious, but they can have little weight with Protestants. We know of nothing, therefore, to forbid the probability that the last years of his life

were spent at Jerusalem, from which he may have addressed his second epistle to the Christians of Palestine, in which, like James, he so clearly announces the immediate coming of the Lord (Chapter iii.), and exhorts believers to be looking for and hastening it, that they may be found of him without spot and blameless.

Assuming, then, for the moment, that the "two witnesses" were the apostles James and Peter, we see how admirably they correspond to the particulars mentioned of them, at least so far as the facts are known.

1. They were Christ's official witnesses.

2. They testified, i. e., preached the gospel, and especially announced the immediate coming of Christ, during the period of the Roman invasion and siege, which, as we have seen, lasted three and one-half years.

3. They testified in sackcloth; i. e., their message was one of reproof and woe.

4. They served to the church in those dark days the same office of encouragement and strength which was performed by Zerubbabel and Joshua, the two anointed ones represented by the candlesticks and olive trees of Zech. iv. 11-14.

5. They had miraculous powers, such as Elijah had when sent to be the Lord's witness before Ahab and Ahaziah (1 Kings xvii. 1; 2 Kings i. 10, 12), and Moses, when he bore God's message

to Pharaoh; Ex. vii. 19, etc. In other words, they should be to their generation what Elijah and Moses were to theirs, and accredited by similar attestations of divine power working through them. It is not necessary to suppose that they actually *did* call down fire from heaven, and *did* turn waters into blood, like those earlier prophets, but that they were furnished with *credentials* of their divine mission as signal and unmistakable as those prophets were.

6. They were martyred under the Roman authority, represented by the figure of the beast from the bottomless pit. This character is more fully disclosed in Chapter thirteen; he is mentioned here by anticipation. The indignities heaped upon their dead bodies for three and a half days, the refusal to them of the sacred rites of burial, and the rejoicing of the people of the earth (i. e., of the *land*, viz., Palestine), that they were thus rid of those who so constantly annoyed them by their warnings and denunciations, — all these are particulars of which no positive mention is made in history, but which are intrinsically probable, and are wholly in keeping with the awful scenes of violence and bloodshed that attended the siege and fall of the city.

7. There remains only the seventh particular, in respect to which, as to the preceding, we have no positive information. It is possible that a literal

resurrection and ascension of these martyred witnesses occurred. That no record of so stupendous a miracle is left us, if it did occur, is not surprising, for the events of those last hours of an expiring city no mortal pen could have recorded. Josephus wrote as a Jew, a military officer in the Roman army. He would be little likely to have heard of it; while in the city itself, spectator and historian, actors and observers, all alike perished. Even the resurrection and ascension of our Lord himself found no place in secular history, and but for the testimony of a few of his intimate friends, the world would never have heard of it. On the other hand, it may not be necessary to suppose in the case of these witnesses a literal, visible ascension. A heroic death, like that of Stephen, with an eye fixed on the opening glories of heaven, may have been sufficient to warrant the language before us. Their enemies may have inflicted temporal death, but the undaunted courage and holy faith that could see Jesus on the right hand of God waiting to receive his servant, may have been like a visible resurrection and ascension in the presence of all beholders.

Such, then, is our best conjecture as to the meaning of these mysterious witnesses. We do not ask any one to accept it as the true one. There are gaps in the evidence which sustains it, of which we are fully aware, and which we know

not how to fill. We can only say that of all the theories we have ever read on the subject, we recall none which do not seem to us less supported by facts and less probable in itself than this.

COMPLETION OF THE SIXTH TRUMPET.

CHAPTER XI. (13) And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand persons: and the rest were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

(14) The second Woe is past: behold, the third Woe cometh quickly.

The martyrdom and resurrection of these witnesses were accompanied (verse xiii.) by a great earthquake, which destroyed a tenth part of the city, and seven thousand men. Perhaps this is not to be taken literally, but somewhat like the catastrophes predicted under the second and third trumpets (Chapter viii.). And yet it is a remarkable fact that something greatly resembling this did literally happen in the siege, as described by Josephus. On that fatal night when the Idumeans were admitted into the city by the Zealots, he says: "There broke out a prodigious storm in the night, with the utmost violence and very strong winds, with the largest showers of rain, with continual lightnings, terrible thunderings, and amazing concussions and bellowings of the earth that was in *an earthquake*. These things

were a manifest indication that some destruction was coming upon men, when the system of the world was put into this disorder, and any one would guess that these wonders foreshadowed some grand calamities that were coming." The Idumeans engaged in a general massacre, and "the outer temple was all of it overflowed with blood; and that day, as it came on, saw *eight thousand, five hundred dead bodies there.*" War, iv. 4, 5; iv. 5, 1.

The effect of this awful catastrophe upon the surviving multitude is briefly noted,—they "were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven." There is no reason to infer that this was anything more than the consternation which reigned throughout the fated city during this most terrible of all sieges. Every new event of horror sent a new wave of fright through the struggling mass, extorting new outcries and supplications to God for mercy. So under Christ's ministry, the displays of his miraculous power often filled the multitudes with fear, and led them to "glorify God," without implying any repentance for their sins, or any sincere spiritual worship of him. Compare Luke v. 26; xxiii. 47; Acts iv. 21.

So ends the second woe-trumpet, with its interruptions and episodes, and we pass to the third and last.

THE SEVENTH TRUMPET.

CHAPTER XI. (15) And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become *the kingdom* of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever. (16) And the four and twenty elders, which sit before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces, and worshiped God, saying, (17) We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, which art and which wast; because thou hast taken thy great power, and didst reign. (18) And the nations were wroth, and thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and *the time* to give their reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, the small and the great; and to destroy them that destroy the earth.

(19) And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant; and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Glancing through the first five verses we find mention of the following things:—

1. The establishment of the new kingdom of Christ, which shall continue forever.

2. The beginning of the judgment of the dead, and the reward of the faithful prophets and martyrs.

3. The destruction of the enemies and persecutors of the church.

4. The abolition of the Mosaic religious system, and the opening of access to God through the one mediation of Christ to all mankind.

5. The whole accompanied by the sublime

physical phenomena which in the Jewish conceptions were the tokens of God's coming to men to rule over and to judge the world.

In other words, we have here described that great event known as the second coming—the *Parousia*—of the Lord, involving the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the old dispensation, and the establishment of the kingdom of heaven.

Let us look at the particulars specified therein.

1. The beginning of the “kingdom of heaven,”—that mediatorial reign of Jesus Christ which is to continue forever. “There were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms (the corrected text reads *kingdom*, meaning not the several nationalities and governments, but the *supreme dominion*) of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he [Christ] shall reign forever and ever.” This is in entire accordance with all those passages which assert that Christ had ascended to his throne, at the right hand of the Father, where he was to reign till he had put all enemies under his feet. Ps. ii.; Dan. vii. 14; Mark xvi. 9; Eph. i. 20-23; Phil. ii. 9-11; Heb. i. 3; viii. 1; x. 12; xii. 2, etc. From that time also appeared the visible kingdom of heaven among men,—the Christian church emerging from the ruins of the old dispensation, under which it had for a few years been sheltered, and with which it had, to outward view, been

confounded, now assuming its separate identity, and going forward upon a career, at first of suffering and afterward of triumph, till in the person of Constantine, the first Christian emperor, it became the mistress of the world. To this effect was the song of the elders, of thanksgiving to God, "Thou hast taken thy great power, and hast reigned," — or as Stuart translates, — "hast become king," — of course, meaning in the person of Christ, to whom he had given the kingdom. "And," they add, with evident allusion to Ps. ii. 1, 5, 12, "the nations (i. e., Gentiles) were angry, and thy wrath is come."

2. The destruction of the old dispensation, its ritual, its laws, its altar and sacrifices, its temple, and the sacred city which had once been honored as the place where God had dwelt. All the terrific symbols of the preceding seals and trumpets foreshadowed this awful result. The wrath had come, the time for *destroying them that destroyed the land*; verse 18. The minute description of the final scene is withheld—it was probably among those things uttered by the seven thunders of God's wrath, which were ordered to be sealed up, as if too fearful for any human ear. This, in the customary Jewish phraseology, was the "end of the world" or age (Matt. xxiv. 3), — the close of "the world that now is," and the introduction of "the world to come." It was the final fulfill-

ment of all those predictions of woe to the apostate church of the former dispensation which had been uttered by all the prophets, from Moses, who gave them the law, to Christ, whom as their crowning act of rebellion they rejected and crucified.

3. The judgment of the dead, and rewarding of the faithful prophets and saints who had suffered in the name of Christ. Judgment here means *vindication*, such as was promised the martyrs in Chapter vi. 10, 11. The passage is in exact correspondence with Matt. xvi. 27, 28, "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then shall he *reward every man according to his works*. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." It must be remembered that a *king* was among the ancients a *judge*. When Christ ascended to his throne and began to reign as King, he began at the same time to execute the office of Judge. The two are essential and inseparable functions of the same supreme dignity. That "judgment seat," before which all must appear to receive the things done in the body (2 Cor. v. 10), is the same throne of glory upon which he reigns at the Father's right hand; its beginning and duration are coeval and co-eternal with it.

4. The opening of the temple of God in heaven. By this we understand the free access henceforth conferred on all believers, through the efficacy of Christ's sole mediation, to the Father in heaven. In other words, it is precisely the same great truth so fully shown in Heb. vii. to x. God is no longer unapproachable by men. The shekinah of his presence is no more shut away in the inner shrine, into which no man may enter; the veil is rent; the ark on which is the mercy seat is thrown open to all who come to it in Christ's name. The gospel of salvation by faith for every penitent soul is henceforth enthroned, and is to be proclaimed through all the world to every creature.

5. All these sublime events clustering around the destruction of this guilty city constituted that great crisis in the religious status of mankind which had been predicted as destined to take place at the COMING (Parousia) of the Lord, and were accompanied by that awe-inspiring symbolism with which that coming was always associated. "There were lightnings and voices and thunderings and an earthquake and great hail." We need not ask whether all these literally occurred in those last days of the siege — we know in fact from Josephus that they did — but we see in them more than this. They were the insignia of the Divine Presence, the *costume*, so to speak, of the coming. It is not, perhaps, unworthy of mention

that the words, and “art to come,” in the seventeenth verse, are not found in the most ancient manuscripts, and hence are omitted from the corrected text. Is it too much to infer from this that the elders in their song of thanksgiving recognize Christ as *having come* in these events, and as being no longer him who was *to come*?

In the midst of this tempest of wrath and woe, the curtain falls and closes up the view. Words are not added to tell in detail the horrors of a city's death. Had not the pen of a Jew — himself an eye-witness and an actor in the scenes he describes — recorded them, we should never have known what those horrors were. We invite such of our readers as possess or have access to the work of Josephus to read his History of the Jewish War, especially the fifth and sixth Books, and let them serve as a commentary on these five chapters of this prophecy. In silence and awe the apostle leaves the last scene to the imagination of his readers, and the first part of the Revelation is closed.

IV.

THE SECOND PROPHETIC BOOK.

THE Jews were not the only persecutors of Christianity. In the tenth year of the reign of Nero (A.D. 64), a fire broke out in Rome, which destroyed two-thirds of the city. Popular suspicion fell upon Nero himself as the author of this calamity, and the murmurs of indignation became so loud that the tyrant was alarmed, and looked about for some way of escape from the odium. The Christians were then becoming numerous in Rome, and were already the objects of hatred to the pagans. It was quite easy, therefore, for Nero to accuse them of the crime and inflame still more the popular animosity. Accordingly, he began the most furious persecution against them, arresting great numbers, and putting them to death, by fire, by crucifixion, and every form of lingering torment. It was in this persecution, as is believed, that John was banished to Patmos and wrote this book as a message of comfort and admonition to the suffering churches. This persecution was the first in a series of similar inflictions lasting two hundred and fifty years to the reign of Constantine.

Having in the preceding chapters described the

judgments of God upon the hostile Jews, culminating in the overthrow of their sacred temple and city, the apostle receives further disclosures as to the purpose of God toward this still more formidable persecutor, Rome. And to give a clearer view of the origin and ruling spirit of the persecution, he takes us back to the beginning of Christianity, and with a few graphic touches describes the birth of Christ himself, and the efforts made by the great Adversary of the church for his destruction.

THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON.

CHAPTER XII. (1) And a great sign was seen in heaven; a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; (2) and she was with child: and she crieth out, travailing in birth, and in pain to be delivered. (3) And there was seen another sign in heaven; and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems. (4) And his tail draweth the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon standeth before the woman which was about to be delivered, that when she was delivered, he might devour her child. (5) And she was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne. (6) And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

We are to suppose the apostle as still looking upward, not probably through the "open door," as at first (Chap. iv. 1), but upon the sky, from

whence the mighty angel came down in Chap. x. 1, 8. There appears to him a great wonder (Chap. xii. 1), literally, sign or symbol, viz., a woman invested with glorious splendor, like the sun, standing on a silvery cloud of the luster of the moon, and wearing upon her head a circlet of twelve starry gems. She is the church of God crowned with the names of her twelve tribes, as the high priest wore the same names emblazoned upon his jeweled breastplate. This idea of the church as a woman, a bride, and a mother, was quite common among the prophets, and would be easily recognized by the readers of the book. Compare, especially, Gal. iv. 26, where Paul speaks of "Jerusalem — which is *the mother of us all*."

Standing before the woman, in the half erect attitude of the snake when about to strike, there appeared another sign, a great bloody-hued dragon or serpent, with seven heads — seven the number of fulness and completeness — each head having a crest, or "crown," perhaps like the hooded co-bras of the East, and bearing collectively ten horns, apparently the three central heads two each, and the others one. His tail, sweeping in convolutions across the sky, dislodged the stars over a third part — sixty degrees — of heaven. What this terrific symbol meant is expressly stated in verse 9, in language very clearly identi-

fyng him with the Tempter which deceived our first parents, the ancient enemy of God and man. His crimson hue betrays his malice and cruelty, the crowns and horns his kingly dignity and power, as the Prince of this world, and his prodigious length the vast reach of his sway, through the dominion of the Roman empire.

The dragon stands thus waiting for the birth of the Messiah, the man-child that was to rule all nations with an iron scepter. No person familiar with Psalms ii. and cx. could doubt who was meant by this man-child. As little could he hesitate in referring the time here intended to the endeavor of Herod to destroy the infant Jesus.

The murderous intent of the dragon was defeated, and the child was caught up to God and to his throne. A single line covers the whole life and death and ascension of the Messiah, the purpose of the writer not being to give the details of the history, but only to refer most concisely to those events which disclosed the diabolical enmity of Satan. The woman, the church of God, fled into the wilderness, an allusion to the refuge which the Christian believers found during the last part of those bloody times at Pella, in the wild region beyond the Jordan, where they abode in entire safety during the three and a half years—the one thousand two hundred sixty days—of the war, which ended in the fall of Jerusalem.

THE CONFLICT IN HEAVEN.

CHAPTER XII. (7) And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels *going forth* to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; (8) and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. (9) And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him. (10) And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accuseth them before our God day and night. (11) And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death. (12) Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea: because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time.

The dragon, seeing his intention frustrated, with desperate daring pursues the ascending Messiah even to heaven, but is there met at the threshold by Michael, the guardian angel of the church, with his associate angels. The word Michael signifies "Who is like God?" and is the name of "the great Prince who standeth for the people of God." Dan. xii. 1. The Scriptures repeatedly speak of guardian angels both of nations and individuals. Compare Dan. x. 5-21, where Gabriel represents himself as struggling with the Prince, i. e., guardian angel, of Persia, to obtain the deliverance of the Jews. He promises to

renew the struggle when the Prince of Greece shall come. So in Jude 9, Michael is represented as contending with Satan about the body of Moses. All this was in accordance with the peculiar ideas of the Jews, and becomes easy of interpretation when read in the light of their opinions. It was a symbolic and very picturesque method of showing the hostility of Satan to the church, and the methods to which he resorted to effect its ruin.

In this supernal conflict Satan and his forces are overthrown and cast out of heaven, and a song of triumph is raised by the saints over his downfall. The epithet, "accuser of our brethren," is applied to him probably from the scene referred to by Job, when this malignant spirit made his false charges against the patriarch, a business which he is represented as being constantly occupied with day and night. His temptations, however, are defeated by the fidelity of the saints, and by the steadfastness which triumphed even in death. At the same time a wail of sympathy is uttered for those still living for the woes impending under the new persecution which he will instigate, a persecution infuriated by the consciousness that his time is short.

THE DRAGON'S WRATH.

CHAPTER XII. (13) And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man *child*. (14) And there were given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. (15) And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river, that he might cause her to be carried away by the stream. (16) And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth. (17) And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus: and he stood upon the sand of the sea.

The symbols now return again to the woman who had fled into the wilderness, the narrative having been interrupted for a short time to describe this celestial conflict and defeat. The time, times, and half a time, i. e., three and a half years, are the same period mentioned in verse 6. The flood of waters ejected after her by the serpent may be suggested by the supposed power of enraged serpents to spit poison after their escaping victims. The earth opening its mouth to swallow up the flood probably refers to some providential interposition for the relief of the persecuted. Stuart suggests the approach of the Roman armies, which arrested the violent assaults of the Jews, and shut them up within their own walls. The chapter then ends with a declaration of the

malice of Satan, and the instigation of the new persecution against "the remnant of the woman's seed," viz., those that had survived the hostility of the Jews. This new persecution is that of Nero, and his successors, the emperors of pagan Rome.

The next chapter brings into view the agents through whom the persecution is to be carried on.

THE TWO BEASTS.

The twelfth chapter, as we have previously stated, is prefatory to the second part of this book, showing the origin and prime instigator of the great Roman persecutions, which had already begun their bloody work under Nero. The present chapter describes the *agents* through whom that work would be carried on. It can scarcely be doubted that the general conception is modeled after the visions of Daniel recorded in his seventh chapter, which most commentators now agree predicted a series of eastern monarchies, all more or less hostile to the people of God, culminating in the kingdom of Syria, and the "little horn," Antiochus Epiphanes, who inflicted the most ferocious cruelties upon the Jews as described in the apocryphal books of the Maccabees. Nothing could be more natural or suggestive to those who were familiar with that earlier prophecy and its fulfillment than the exhibition of this

new persecutor under like symbols, sufficiently varied to meet the differing circumstances of the case, and yet with enough similarity to show the same malicious designs and the same sure and signal overthrow.

THE BEAST FROM THE SEA.

CHAPTER XIII. (1) And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy (2) And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as *the feet* of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion; and the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority. (3) And *I saw* one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death; and his death-stroke was healed: and the whole earth wondered after the beast; (4) and they worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to make war with him? (5) and there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and there was given to him authority to continue forty and two months. (6) And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, *even* them that dwell in the heaven. (7) And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. (8) And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, *every one* whose name hath not been written in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world. (9) If any man hath an ear, let him ear. (10) If any man *is* for captivity, into captivity he goeth: if any man shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Inasmuch as an angel formally explains in Chap. xvii. 7-18 the signification of "the beast," we may anticipatively refer to that explanation as we look at this chapter.

The apostle is standing upon the shore of the sea, because, says Stuart, he is now to see objects *terrestrial* and actions done among men. He beholds a terrific beast rising out of the sea; — the sea symbolizing, probably, as in Chap. xvii. 15, "peoples and multitudes and tongues and nations." That is, there arises among the world's vast populations a power represented by this beast. He, too, like the dragon whom he is to serve, has seven crowned heads and ten horns, symbols of imperial power. Those heads are seven "kings," or emperors (Chap. xvii. 10), — the original word standing interchangeably for both; — they refer also to the seven mountains which constitute his seat or abode; xvii. 9. The horns are tributary or allied kings; xvii. 12. Upon the heads are names of blasphemy, i. e., blasphemous titles. The body of the beast was lithe and swift like a leopard; his feet broad and firm like those of a bear; his mouth armed with huge teeth like the mouth of a lion; in other words, he was endowed with the power of the most terrific wild beasts known to men. This monster is the servant of the dragon, the great persecutor of God's people, receiving from him

his power, his throne, and his world-wide authority. He is the IMPERIAL MONARCHY OF ROME.

One of his heads was wounded as if to death; but his deadly wound was healed. This is evidently an enigmatical way of designating some one of the Roman emperors. It seems to be one of the instances so often occurring in the apostolic writings, in which the existing sovereign is pointed to under some obscure appellation, because of the hazard of mentioning him by name (compare the "Man of Sin," and "That Wicked One," in 2 Thess. ii.). He seems also referred to in Chap. xvii. 8 as "the beast that was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition," i. e., was alive, then dead, afterward came back from hades, and finally perished. Also in Chap. xvii. 11, as "the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven." Who was meant by this?

Some think Julius Cæsar, the first of the Cæsars, who was slain by Brutus and his fellow conspirators. This at first seemed a "deadly wound" to the beast; but Augustus succeeded him, and established the monarchy firmly, so that the deadly wound was healed. But how did Julius come back from hades, and how was he the eighth? And what necessity was there of referring to him, now long dead, in a concealed manner, or implying that it needed a "mind that

had wisdom " (Chap. xvii. 9) to perceive the meaning?

Stuart, therefore, and others, think Nero was intended. Certain heathen oracles had predicted that Nero would be dangerously wounded, but would recover, seize the imperial throne a second time, and finally perish. Abundant evidence of this singular prophesy, and of its general notoriety throughout the empire, is shown in the writings of Tacitus, Suetonius, Dio Cassius, the Sibylline Oracles, Lactantius, and others. It is not supposed that John, in using this prediction, meant to be understood as indorsing it, but only used a prevailing opinion as a suggestive, though enigmatical way of hinting whom he meant. It is as if he should say, "I mean him of whom it was said that he should be assaulted and wounded, but should escape and recover from his wound, and afterward regain his throne." This designation would fit into the verses of Chap. xvii.,—"him that was, and is not, and comes back from hades, and afterward goes into perdition." Also of the seven kings (or emperors); five, viz., Julius Cæsar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius, are fallen; one, the sixth Nero, is, i. e., is now reigning, the seventh, Galba, is not yet, and when he cometh he must continue a short space (Galba reigned but seven months). Then, if the prediction about Nero proved true, he

would after his restoration be the eighth, though also one of the seven, and finally go into perdition, i. e., utterly perish. The fact, too, that Nero was actually reigning when this book was written, would be the best possible reason why John could not speak of him more openly, and why he should suggest that the "mind that had wisdom" should exert itself to discern the allusion.

It is not probable that absolute certainty will ever be attained as to the correctness of this explanation. A passage, originally intended to be obscure, and now still more shrouded in the dim distance of antiquity, with allusions to circumstances and opinions of which so little can now be known, should not be expected to be perfectly clear at this day. This much, however, can confidently be said, that the view above given is consistent with itself, and far more reasonable than any other with which we are acquainted.

The remainder of the description of this beast entirely harmonizes with what we know of Nero. That all the world wondered at the power and magnificence of the emperor; that it paid to him divine homage, which virtually was to worship the Devil that inspired and employed him, and boasted of his invincible might, was only what is attested by all the history of the time. That he himself uttered great things and blasphemies, proclaiming himself as God, assuming divine titles,

and commanding worship to be paid to his images, is equally well known. That power was given him to *act* (not *continue*, as our present version has it), i. e., to do his will in persecuting the church, forty and two months, or three and a half years, accords almost literally with the actual duration of his persecutions. They began in the latter part of the year A.D. 64, and ended with the death of Nero on the 9th day of June, A.D. 68. Without insisting on the exact duration, it is probable that the three and one-half years was named because that was the time assigned by Daniel (Chap. vii. 25) as the period of that earlier persecutor of the church, Antiochus Epiphanes,—an allusion which would strikingly suggest the same fate for this enemy that befell him. Verses 7 and 8 show how wide was the sway of this tyrant, and how extensive and abject the homage which he received from all classes of people throughout the empire.

The fearful description of this monster closes with a consolatory word. Let not the churches wholly despair. Whoever has an ear, listen! God will requite the persecutor that banishes the saints into distant prisons and mines, and destroys them by the sword. “He who sends into exile shall himself be exiled; he who kills with the sword shall be killed with the sword! In this assurance let the saints have patience and faith!”

How striking the fulfillment of these words in the death of Nero! When his troops and his palace guards had revolted against him, he fled out of the city, but could get no further than the villa of his freedmen, four miles outside the walls. There he heard that the Senate had just met and decreed his death "in the ancient fashion" as a public enemy. "Asking," says Merivale, "what this phrase purported, he was told that the culprit was stripped, his neck inserted in a forked stick, and his body smitten with rods till death. Terrified at this announcement, he took two daggers from his bosom, tried their edge, but again laid them down, alleging that the moment was not yet arrived. Again and again he tried to nerve himself to the last effort, but it was not till the sound of horses' hoofs was heard, and the messengers of death were plainly closing upon him, that he placed a weapon at his breast, and bade his slave Epaphroditus drive it home. Another moment, and it would have been too late. The centurion and his soldiers burst into the room just in time to receive his dying execrations. The corpse was imperfectly consumed on the spot, and the remains were left to the attendants, by some of whom they were eventually laid in the Domitian gardens on the Pincian."

THE SECOND BEAST.

CHAPTER xiii. (11) And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. (12) And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight. And he maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose death stroke was healed. (13) And he doeth great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men. (14) And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, who hath the stroke of the sword, and lived. (15) And it was given *unto him* to give breath to it, *even* to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed. (16) And he causeth all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead; (17) and that no man should be able to buy or to sell, save he that hath the mark, *even* the name of the beast or the number of his name.

The imperial monarchy of Rome, in the days of its emperors, was twofold, civil and spiritual. And these were in the closest alliance, church and state being one in a unity of which the crowned papacy of later ages was an almost exact copy. The sovereign was not only Imperator (emperor), but Pontifex Maximus (chief priest). The pagan religio was a vast system of beliefs, of rites, and of priestly orders, holding universal supremacy in the empire. The hierarchy possessed great wealth

and social prestige; the worship of the deities was celebrated in beautiful temples with imposing and costly ceremonies; affairs of state, of military service, of international intercourse, and of all the occupations of private life, went on under the constant guidance and sanctions of religion as established by law. Indeed, the absolute unity of the civil and spiritual powers in all the middle-age monarchies of Europe, and in lands like Russia, Great Britain, Spain, etc., to this day, not only shows to us examples of what Rome was, but is itself historically derived from that mode of national life which was once universal among men.

And these two departments of the imperial government were mutual supporters of each other. The emperor, the senate, and all local magistrates, were protectors and patrons of the religious establishment. It was the most inexpiable of crimes to neglect or insult it, for it was to dishonor the gods, and bring down their wrath upon Rome. The hierarchy, in turn, were the defenders of the throne. Priests, augurs, soothsayers, vestal virgins, the very lowest acolytes of the temples, made it their first duty, as it was their interest, to honor the powers that were over them. When the emperors, intoxicated by mad vanity, aspired to be gods, it was the priests that gave them the titles of "Divus" and "Augustus."

tus," and taught the people to worship their images, and the soldiers to swear by the crowned effigies on their standards. If these bloody tyrants wore upon their heads "names of blasphemy," it was the professed servants of the gods that put them there.

When, therefore, Christianity with its lofty assumption of being the only true religion, and its declaration that all heathen gods were false and their worship a lie, began to take root and grow in favor at Rome, it is not to be wondered at that it encountered the deadliest hostility of the pagan priesthood. And when the Arch-persecutor, Satan, set himself to destroy the infant-church, he found ready formed to his hand this vast enginery of power to do his work with. Do we need, then, to go farther to find the SECOND BEAST of verses 11-17?

He comes up out of the earth instead of the sea, possibly only to show a difference between him and the first beast, having but two little lamb-like horns, as if most inoffensive, but a voice of cunning and deceit, as crafty as a serpent (verse 11). He has no force of armies and navies of his own, but he *uses*, when he has need of them, all the powers of the empire. He causes, by his teaching, and by a multitude of omens, incantations, prodigies, and pretended miracles, the whole nation, which was then the whole world (Luke

ii. 1; Acts xix. 27), to worship the first beast "whose deadly wound was healed" (verse 12). (See the well-known story about Nero described heretofore). He performs by magic and legerdemain and spiritualism great wonders (compare Acts viii. 9-11; xvi. 16; xix. 13-19), deluding the people into adherence to the old idolatry, and teaching them this new and most debasing emperor-worship, and making it a capital offense to refuse it (verses 13, 14, 15). Indeed, he makes the adoration of the standards a mark of loyalty, refusing the privileges of citizenship — the right to traffic and pursue ordinary occupations — to such as will not do this homage to their sovereign (verses 16, 17). The Romans were accustomed to brand their soldiers in the hand with a mark, to indicate to what corps they belonged, as our own men in the late war wore badges on their breasts. Slaves were branded in their foreheads with the initials of their masters. In India persons wear little dabs of paint, or something more offensive, upon their foreheads, in token of being devout worshipers of some god. Possibly allusion may be made to the analogous practice of Christians receiving baptism, with the sign of the cross.

THE NAME OF THE BEAST.

CHAPTER XIII. (18) He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man: and his number is Six hundred and sixty and six.

Thus far, then, the description of these two beasts, representatives of the twofold persecuting power of Rome, the throne and the hierarchy—the state and the pagan church. We are sure that the graphic skill and faithfulness of the delineation must strike every reader who is familiar with the history of that epoch, and be itself the most convincing proof of the true meaning of the passage. But as if this were not enough—as if to fix the designation without the possibility of mistake, and so give the strongest ground for confidence when the downfall of these foes of the church shall be announced, the apostle subjoins another description, so peculiar in itself, so well calculated to baffle the curiosity of dangerous enemies, and yet so easily read by those familiar with this mode of designation, as most perfectly to serve the double purpose of concealing and revealing the very *name* of him who was meant. His name, says he, is *Six hundred and sixty-six*. “Let him that hath understanding decipher it.”

This way of computing names grew out of the fact that in the ancient languages letters were used both for letters and figures. Thus in Latin the present year is MDCCCLXXXV, the amount

being the sum of the several letters added together. Thus,

$$M = 1000$$

$$D = 500$$

$$C = 100$$

$$C = 100$$

$$C = 100$$

$$L = 50$$

$$X = 10$$

$$X = 10$$

$$X = 10$$

$$V = 5$$

$$MDCCCLXXXV = 1885$$

So says the apostle, the Beast's name amounts to 666.

The first thing requisite to the solution is to determine in what language it is to be sought. The book being written in Greek suggests that the name may be found in this. Irenæus, one of the early fathers, accordingly suggested the word LATEINOS, "the Latin," or Roman, which by the rules of Greek numeration would make the number thus,

$$L \quad A \quad T \quad E \quad I \quad N \quad O \quad S$$

$$30+1+300+5+10+50+70+200=666$$

This explanation fits the case, and is not altogether inapposite; yet it seems a little unnatural

to call the emperor or the imperial power simply "the Latin," to say nothing of the fact that at this early period the Romans were hardly designated as *Latins*, that term being applied simply to the inhabitants of *Latium*, one of the small ancient provinces of this part of Italy. Many scholars, therefore, have preferred to look for the name in Hebrew, which being a language almost wholly unknown to the heathen, and yet familiar to those who could read the Old Testament Scriptures, would better serve the purpose in view, to conceal, and at the same time to reveal. Turning to the Hebrew, therefore, we find that the number is exactly found in the name NERO-CESAR, i. e., Nero the emperor.

This spelling can easily be shown to the mere English reader, thus: The 119th Psalm, in our Bibles, is divided into twenty-two parts, to each of which is prefixed one of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. When these letters were used as figures, the first ten down to *jod* inclusive were units; the next ten, to *koph*, were tens; the remainder, hundreds, etc. Now in Hebrew the aforesaid name, — dropping the vowel points, — would be N-R-O-N K-S-R, i. e., *Nun-resh-vau-nun koph-samech-resh*, which, as any one can see by referring to said Psalm, would be,

$$\begin{array}{cccccc} \text{N} & \text{R} & \text{O} & \text{N} & \text{K} & \text{S} & \text{R} \\ 50+200+6+50+100+60+200=666 \end{array}$$

It should be added that Irenæus says some ancient manuscripts had the number 616. This variation would be exactly accounted for by supposing the last N in Neron dropped, a mode of spelling entirely proper, the difference being much like that between *a* and *an* in the English article, "This double coincidence," says Prof. Cowles, "is of the sort which could not occur by chance and without a foundation in truth one time in ten thousand. It amounts, therefore, practically to a demonstration."

ENCOURAGEMENTS.

Appalling beyond conception to the Christians in Asia and at Rome must have been the disclosures of the last chapter. Two ferocious beasts — a sea-monster and a land-monster — combining all hideous beastly forms, with heads and horns and teeth and claws such as no actual beast ever had, under the instigation and endowed with the infernal power of the great seven-headed, bloody-hued serpent of the bottomless pit, *to be let loose* upon the infant churches! And even when translated out of the realm of symbol into plain, naked fact — IMPERIAL ROME, the mistress of the world, her throne and her hierarchy, under whose iron yoke the mightiest nations bowed submissively, and upon whom armed legions, mercenary prætorian guards, dens of wild beasts, crosses and

dungeons and martyr-fires waited to enforce her will, roused in bitter hostility against the poor, humble, defenseless followers of Jesus, and a voice from heaven itself proclaiming, "*Unto her it is given to make war with the saints and to overcome them!*" How impossible for us in this age of peaceful security, the fruit of many centuries of victory over tyranny, to form any idea of what such a message must have been to those who received it!

Why were they not utterly crushed by it? Only because of the loving help of their Lord, which he had promised should be sufficient for their utmost need, and because of the encouragements subjoined to the announcement of the suffering. Those encouragements, sevenfold in form, as is so much the wont of this book, are presented in this chapter.

1. A view of the glory of those who had been faithful under the former persecution. Verses 1-5.

2. Assurance of the universal spread of the gospel. Verses 6, 7.

3. Prediction of the downfall of their persecutor. Verse 8.

4. The doom of those who should apostatize. Verses 9-12.

5. The blessedness of those who should suffer. Verse 13.

6. The gathering of the wicked to judgment. Verses 14-16.

7. Their terrible punishment. Verses 18-20.

These particulars follow each other rapidly, as being a sort of summary, to be unfolded more at length in the sequel.

1. THE FAITHFUL OF THE FORMER PERSECUTION.

CHAPTER XIV. (1) And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads. (2) And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard *was as the voice* of harpers, harping with their harps: (3) and they sing as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders: and no man could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand, *even* they that had been purchased out of the earth. (4) These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These *are* they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, *to be* the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb. (5) And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish.

That persecution was described in Chapters 6-11. The apostle is shown the one hundred and forty-four thousand who were sealed from among the tribes of Israel, now gathered in glory upon Mount Zion in the heavenly world, around the throne of the Lamb whom they had served. Our version reads *a* Lamb, but the corrected one has *the* Lamb. The literal Zion at Jerusalem was the

western eminence, about one hundred and twenty-five feet higher than Mount Moriah, the site of the temple. The former was the ancient city of David, upon which he built his palace (2 Sam. v. 9, 11) and erected a tent or tabernacle for the worship of God, thus making Mount Zion both the religious and political capital of the nation. It was from this fact that in the earlier psalms, written by David before the erection of the temple, the name "Zion" became so identified with the worship of Jehovah that it was made the symbol of the church both here and in heaven. Compare Heb. xii. 22. Before the Roman subjugation, also, Zion was the seat of the royal palace of Herod, so that that eminence had always been associated with the idea of the national sovereignty. The symbol before us, then, suggests victory for God's people over the foes that had oppressed them, and a restoration to their national glory under the scepter of the Son of David, their royal Messiah. It is a consummation, however, only in heaven, not to be confounded with those anticipations of restored political power on earth which all Jews were so fond of entertaining.

Not only are they victors over their enemies, but they have attained high honor and joy. On their foreheads they wear diadems upon which are emblazoned both the names of Christ and of his Father (so the amended text), like the golden

frontlet upon the forehead of the high priest (Ex. xxviii. 38). With one voice they sing a new song, loud, like the roar of the ocean, but soft and sweet as the notes of the harp; a chorus whose melody penetrates beyond the heavenly world, and reaches even to the listener on earth. The song is one which none can sing but they, for no others can know the joy of faithful saints who have triumphed over persecution and death. They are clad in virgin robes, for they have never yielded even in thought to the seductions of idolatry, with all its nameless impurities, which have in all ages made a part of idol worship. They were in life the true followers of Christ, taking up the cross, and going with him to ignominy and to death. Therefore have they been redeemed from among men; selected and gathered out like the choicest and heaviest wheat-ears of the field, and made the first-fruits to God and the Lamb of the grand harvest of the faithful. Sincere and true in every thought and word, they now stand in spotless glory before the throne of God. Such was the first motive presented to the churches to patience and fidelity under the assaults of this new persecution. "See yonder on the heavenly Zion those who have gone before you! Be steadfast like them, and you shall share in their glory."

2. THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL.

CHAPTER XIV. (6) And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having an eternal gospel to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people; (7) and he saith with a great voice, Fear God, and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters.

Meanwhile, let them not fear for the ultimate result to Christianity itself. The angel flying through mid-heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, and calling to the whole earth to fear God and give to him glory, because the hour of his judgment—that reign of the Messiah as King and Judge which shall result in the vindication of his people—has come, and bidding them worship not the false gods of heathenism, but the Creator himself, who made the heaven and the earth, the sea and the fountains of waters, let him be their assurance that the beast shall have no power to stop the spread of the good news of salvation among men. God himself has sped it forth on its mission, and it shall not stop till every nation has heard its sound. Let this be a second encouragement to fidelity.

3. THE FALL OF THEIR PERSECUTOR.

CHAPTER XIV. (8) And another, a second angel, followed, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, which

hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

And what though their enemy is imperial Rome, proud, self-confident, and cruel, as Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar enslaved and oppressed their fathers? Yet Babylon, haughty as she was, fell, and God's angel of retribution proclaims that this new Babylon shall fall likewise — nay, in God's purpose she "is fallen — is fallen" — the repetition showing the certainty as if already past. She enticed and compelled all nations to serve her idols, pouring out with her imperial hand the intoxicating wine of their licentious and impure worship. Look at the buried ruins and the lonely wastes upon the banks of the Euphrates, and see what the great city which imitates that ancient enemy of God's people shall be.

4. THE FATE OF APOSTATES.

CHAPTER XIV. (9) And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice, If any man worshipeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, (10) he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: (11) and the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image, and whoso receiveth the mark of his name. (12) Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

And besides these encouragements to fidelity, listen to the doom appointed for those who are unfaithful. "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark, the token of submission, in his forehead or in his hand (see Chap. xiii. 16, 17), the same shall drink — not the sweet wine of licentious pleasure — but the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out undiluted into the cup of his indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and as the lurid smoke ascended from the ashes of Sodom on the morning after its conflagration, so shall the smoke of the torment of apostates rise up for ever and ever. And day and night they shall have no cessation of these torments, — they who worship the beast and his image, and take upon them the mark of his name. Let this awful penalty for apostasy be a motive for patience on the part of the saints who keep God's commandments and the faith of Jesus."

5. THE REWARD OF MARTYRS.

CHAPTER XIV. (13) And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them.

And now, like a strain of sweet music succeeding to these awful denunciations, comes the prom-

ise of reward to those who die for their faith. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord—in his name and for his sake—for they cease forever from their sorrows, and their deeds go on with them to heaven, to bear witness of their fidelity, and receive his approval!" Let it be noted that these words, which are so oft made expressive of the hopes of those who live but little like the martyrs, belong to those only who love Jesus enough to die for him.

6. THE HARVEST OF THE EARTH.

CHAPTER XIV. (14) And I saw, and behold, a white cloud; and on the cloud *I saw* one sitting like unto a son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. (15) And another angel came out from the temple, crying with a great voice to him that sat on the cloud, Send forth thy sickle, and reap: for the hour to reap is come; for the harvest of the earth is overripe. (16) And he that sat on the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth; and the earth was reaped.

There remains one motive more to inspire the churches to hope and fortitude against their terrible enemy, and that is a revelation of what shall be to the heathen subjects of the beast. The third symbol foreshadowed the breaking of his power; what, lastly, shall be the fate of the millions that constitute his realm, and give to him his power? Two symbols are employed to show this,—two, perhaps, to increase the impressive-

ness of the prophecy, and perhaps also to round out the number seven, the well-known emblem of fullness and completeness.

There comes upon a resplendent cloud the crowned Redeemer, having in his hand a sharp sickle. We think it cannot be doubted that this is one of those well-known "comings" of the Lord for the punishment of the wicked, so often predicted by the prophets, and by Christ himself. Matt. xxiv. 30. The millions of the earth's population stand before him like the innumerable stalks of wheat in the harvest-fields. At the call of the angel of justice he thrusts in his sickle, and the earth is reaped. The origin of this symbol seems to be found in Joel iii. 13, where the prophet cries, "Put ye in the sickle and reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe," — which the connection shows is a call to gather the wicked of the nations to judgment.

7. THE VINTAGE OF THE EARTH.

CHAPTER XIV. (17) And another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. (18) And another angel came out from the altar, he that hath power over fire; and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Send forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. (19) And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vintage of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great *winepress*, of the wrath of God. (20) And the winepress was trodden without the

city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

A second symbol of retribution is also suggested by the same prophecy. "For the press is full; the fats overflow; for the wickedness is great." An angel issues from the temple of heaven, i. e., from the divine presence, bearing also a sharp sickle, or more appropriately a pruning-knife; and at the call of the angel of sacrifice he gathers the grape harvest of the earth, and brings it to the treading-press, the awful "winepress of the wrath of God." "And the winepress was trodden without the city, i. e., in the open field, as the custom of the East is when the vintage is very abundant, and the blood-red juice flowed out a stream "up to the horses' bridles," i. e., as deep as a horse could wade in without drowning, and spreading forth a thousand and six hundred Roman *stadia*, i. e., two hundred miles, equal to the whole breadth of Italy.

Such are the motives to fidelity held up to the view of the imperiled church. We have no space to comment upon their fitness or their awful import. Let the reader be reminded only that these are words and symbols divinely given, and that, too, through the medium of the most loving and tender of all the apostles. Surely they teach us that God, the protector of his people, is some-

thing more than a mere sentimental Father of all, the good and the wicked alike, and that there is a meaning in his displeasure which all would do well to ponder.

THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES.

CHAPTER XV. (1) And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having seven plagues, which *are* the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God.

As the retributive judgments sent upon persecuting Jerusalem for her crimes were exhibited under the symbols of seven successive *trumpets* (Chaps. viii.-xi.), so the like punishment to be meted out to persecuting Rome is shown under seven "plagues," represented in "another sign," i. e., prophetic symbol, "great and marvelous."

The word plague signifies literally a *blow*, hence an infliction, a stroke of suffering. It was applied to a malignant form of fever, which from the suddenness and violence of its attack was likened to a blow. Here it has the wider meaning of a stroke of chastisement. They are named the *last* plagues, because they will *complete* the punishment that God will inflict on the enemies of his church.

From the similarity of the subject, it might be expected that there would be a considerable resemblance in the modes of treatment in the two cases. In one respect, however, there was a

marked difference. Jerusalem was to be not only chastised, but utterly destroyed. Rome was to be chastised, her power broken, her glory as the capital despoiled and transferred to a new city on the Bosphorus, her religious establishment overthrown, and the great instigator to persecution chained and confined for a thousand years, but the monarchy itself and the state were to survive. It would, indeed, be a troubled existence, convulsed with dissensions within and exposed to invasion from without, until her flickering nationality should be suddenly extinguished by a new race of persecutors from the old northern hive of barbarism, the Turks. The symbols of her punishment, therefore, vary somewhat from those of the former case. They are pictures, not of sweeping, fiery destruction, but of ruin, humiliation, and suffering. Jerusalem perishes amid "lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail." Rome is smitten with great plagues, her people slain, and herself, the Imperial Queen of the Seven Hills, made desolate, like Tyre, on her lonely fishing rock.

AN ANTICIPATORY TRIUMPHAL SONG.

CHAPTER XV. (2) And I saw as it were a glassy sea mingled with fire; and them that come victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name, standing by the glassy sea, having harps of God. (3) And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God,

and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God the Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the ages. (4) Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all the nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy righteous acts have been made manifest.

The appearance of this dread array of angel executioners is the signal for a triumphal song. The transparent pavement which is before the throne of God flashes with ruddy hues of wrath, and the victors in the struggle with the beast, seen in anticipation, stand upon it with heavenly harps, lifting the anthem of praise. It is "the song of Moses and the Lamb," i. e., a song of like character with those, — the one when Moses and all the host of Israel triumphed over the destruction of Pharaoh in the Red sea (Ex. xv. 1-22); the other when Jesus arose triumphant from the grave, and ascended amid the rejoicings of angels to his throne at the right hand of God. In view of the manifested judgments of heaven upon the foes of the church, they see all nations coming to worship before God and yield themselves to his scepter.

PREPARATION.

CHAPTER XV. (5) And after these things I saw, and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: (6) and there came out from the temple the seven angels that had the seven plagues, arrayed with *precious* stone, pure *and* bright, and girt about their breasts with

golden girdles. (7) And one of the four living creatures gave unto the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. (8) And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and none was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.

CHAPTER XVI. (1) And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go ye, and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth.

And now the seven angels come forth from the inmost shrine of the temple, the Holy of holies, and prepare to do their office. They are clothed in the white robes of justice, girded firmly about them, as those who are to engage in stalwart work. They receive from one of the Living Ones that surround the throne "seven golden vials, full of the wrath of the ever-living God." At the same moment a dark cloud enveloping the shekinah of Jehovah's presence fills all the temple courts, excluding access to any who would intercede in behalf of the guilty persecutors until the work of retribution shall be completed. Compare the pillar of cloud in which the Lord was wont to appear in the ancient tabernacle, when about to utter reproof or administer judgments to his people. Numb. xvi. 42.

THE FIRST VIAL.

CHAPTER XVI. (2) And the first went, and poured out his bowl into the earth; and it became a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and which worshiped his image.

1. The first caused putrid and painful ulcers to break out upon the persons of those who worshiped the beast. This was in imitation of the boils and blains inflicted upon the Egyptians. Ex. ix. 8-12.

THE SECOND VIAL.

CHAPTER XVI. (3) And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living soul died, *even* the things that were in the sea.

2. The second turned the water of the sea into blood, as the waters of the Nile. Ex. vii. 19-25.

THE THIRD VIAL.

CHAPTER XVI. (4) And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of waters; and it became blood. (5) And I heard the angel of the waters saying, Righteous art thou, which art and which wast, thou Holy One, because thou didst thus judge: (6) for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and blood hast thou given them to drink: they are worthy. (7) And I heard the altar saying, Yea, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

3. The third did the same with the fountains and rivers, thus making two plagues of what was one in Egypt. This was attended with an inscription of praise from the angel who presides over fountains, at the justice of God in giving blood to drink to them who had shed the blood of the saints and prophets of the Lord, to which was added a response from the altar, in approval of the sentiment.

THE FOURTH VIAL.

CHAPTER XVI. (8) And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given unto it to scorch men with fire. (9) And men were scorched with great heat: and they blasphemed the name of the God which hath the power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

4. The fourth vial introduced a new infliction derived from one of the phenomena of the eastern deserts, the dreaded sirocco. The sun was made to pour forth a scorching heat, as it were rays of fire, which consumed the life and strength of men. And it is added, to show the desperate perversity of these enemies of God and how entirely they merited their sufferings, that they only blasphemed and persisted in their rejection of him, and in adhering to the false gods of their beloved idolatry.

THE FIFTH VIAL.

CHAPTER XVI. (10) And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, (11) and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they repented not of their works.

5. The fifth vial returns again to the Egyptian plagues,—one that was the severest of all next to the death of the first-born,—the plague of darkness. It was poured upon the seat (throne) of the beast, i. e., his capital, Rome itself, and thence apparently spread throughout the empire, till the whole was “full of darkness.” As the

Egyptian darkness was one that could be *felt* (Ex. x. 21), so this caused men to gnaw their tongues from pain, or, as the original more exactly signifies, from labor, weariness, vexation. And they blasphemed God because of these toils, and of their ulcers which still remained; the last implying that their woes were cumulative, each new one not taking the place of a former, but adding to the sum of the whole.

THE SIXTH VIAL.

CHAPTER XVI (12) And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the *river* Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way might be made ready for the kings that *come* from the sunrising. (13) And I saw *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs: (14) for they are spirits of devils, working signs; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. (15) (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame). (16) And they gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon.

6. The sixth vial imitates not one of the Egyptian inflictions, but the sixth of the woe-trumpets sent upon Jerusalem (Chap. ix. 14). All who are familiar with Roman history know that at this time the most persistent and dreaded foes of the empire were the Parthians, who lived east of the Euphrates, a nation of expert horsemen,

famed for their skill in shooting backwards upon an enemy while apparently fleeing before him. To dry up the Euphrates was to remove the barrier which prevented these restless invaders — the kings of the East — from pouring in like a flood upon the empire. This terrific invasion awakens alarm on the part of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, the infernal trio which are engaged in making war upon God's saints, and stirs them up to the most vigorous measures of self-defense. Each of them sends forth a messenger in hot haste to summon the whole empire to muster its forces to resist the avenging instruments of Jehovah. These three messengers are three unclean, lying demons, — spirits endowed with magic powers with which to work pretended miracles for the support of the cause in which they are engaged. They are pictured as issuing from the mouths of the allied three, as an infernal inspiration to take possession of men; in form like frogs, which from their unclean habits and their vile croakings were symbols of all that was repulsive. Compare Milton's figure of Satan in Eden, when tempting our first mother, sitting "squat like a toad" at her ear. These lying spirits go forth through all the empire, then co-extensive with all the world, to rouse the powers of the world, civil and spiritual, to the defense of idolatry, to resistance to the true religion, — in a word, to one desperate, final attack upon God and his church.

Here the seer pauses to interject a message of admonition to his people (verse 15), to bid them be alert and watchful for this divine interposition, that their Lord, when he comes in his terrible glory for their help, may not find them unprepared to meet him. Compare the repeated, earnest warnings given in Matt. xxiv. and xxv., also the epistles to the seven churches in Chaps. ii. and iii. of this Book, calling upon Christians to watch and be ready. How clearly also does this demonstrate that the fulfillment of these prophecies was something then near at hand; that they were matters of immediate personal interest to the churches of that day, conforming strictly to the designation on the title-page of this book, that it had to do with "things which must *shortly* come to pass."

The message of the three lying spirits is successful, and the powers of heathenism are gathered in force to the final conflict. Most suggestively does the apostle add that the *place* where they were assembled was the Hebrew *Armageddon*, or with the Hebrew spelling, Har-Megedon, i. e., Mount Megiddo. This was the fortified town near the river Kishon, where was fought the great battle between the Israelites, under Deborah and Barak, and the Canaanites, under Sisera, in which the latter were totally routed. Judges v. 19. To say that the armies of the en-

emy were assembled at Megiddo, of itself implies that it will be defeated as the Canaanites were. It is as if a French army for the attack of England should be said to be gathered at *Waterloo*. Compare also Zech. xii. 11.

With this suggestion, the army of the beast is left for the moment, while the fate of the capital is made known.

THE SEVENTH VIAL.

As the execution of the events under the seventh seal was divided into seven parts (Chap. viii. 1, 2), so that under the seventh vial is divided into two parts. The first is that which is visited on the *city* of the beast—named symbolically Babylon, which extends to Chap. xix. 10. The second is visited upon the *armies* of the beast, comprised in Chap. xix. 11-21.

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE CITY.

CHAPTER XVI. (17) And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done: (18) and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty. (19) And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. (20) And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. (21)

And great hail, *every stone* about the weight of a talent, cometh down out of heaven upon men: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof is exceeding great.

The seventh vial is poured out into the air, the birthplace of tempests, while a voice from heaven proclaims, "It is done. The last vial of God's displeasure is expended." Forthwith the skies are filled with crashing thunders, and the ground below tossed by an earthquake such as the world never saw before. The earth yawns beneath Rome itself, splitting it into three parts; and elsewhere through the empire the capital cities of the various provinces and tributary kingdoms are thrown down. So God remembers Rome—the new Babylon—in judgment. The islands and mountains sink into the abyss beneath, and a storm of pound-weight hailstones beats upon the defenseless inhabitants.

We have space here only to remark that these vials are a succession of *symbols*, seven in number, signifying in general fullness of chastisement for persecuting Rome. It would be contrary to the very nature of this symbol-writing to attempt to find an exact counterpart of every particular in the actual history that ensued. The parable of the prodigal son is a general picture of the condition of a sinner who is a wanderer from God; but it is a grave error in interpretation to

attempt to find an exact application for every minute act or circumstance related. Every artist puts many things into his picture for the sake of *naturalness*, to fill out and make lifelike the scene as a whole. So here. The seven vials taken out of their pictorial aspect, and translated into simple narrative read: "Rome, her emperor and her hierarchy, shall be brought down to ruin; her people shall suffer a succession of direful calamities; her strength at home shall be broken, and her resources abroad, in her colonies, her provinces, and her tributaries shall be despoiled. Thus shall she suffer the righteous reward for her crimes against the people of God. The idols she has served shall be contemptuously destroyed, and the gospel of Christ, and the church which has been so long persecuted, shall triumph over heathenism, and ascend the throne of the world."

EXPLANATORY.

It is a very remarkable fact that a composition which so many assume to be sealed up from human understanding,—which is both unintelligible, and was designed to be until some supposed time of fulfillment in the future,—is not only named a *Revelation*, but has repeated interruptions for the professed purpose of *explanation*. In Chapter vii. 13, one of the elders condescends to inform the apostle explicitly who were

meant by the saints in white robes. In xiii. 18, pains are taken to tell the name of the beast, in a cautious and technical way, indeed, but one that could scarcely fail to be understood by a discerning Christian reader of that day. In xxi. 9, an angel is sent to show more fully the heavenly city, which had been just before mentioned (verse 2) as "the bride." So here, after the symbolical woes of the seven vials, a whole chapter is expressly devoted to an explanation, by one of the seven angels, of their meaning. It is true that the explanation itself has difficulties in it, since there was the same necessity for caution in speaking of the existing government to which we have before alluded. Probably, however, the difficulty is much greater for us than for Christians of that day. Surely, this much at least must be inferred, that He who gave the contents of this book to men designed that it should be understood by them, and therefore that, with a reasonable degree of consideration and acquaintance with the history and opinions of the times, its meaning may be discerned.

1. THE ANGEL'S OFFER.

CHAPTER XVII. (1) And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls, and spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters; (2) with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they that

dwell in the earth were made drunken with the wine of her fornication.

The angel-executioner now appointed to be an interpreter, addresses the apostle with the proposal to show to him the judgment, i. e., God's retributive chastisement, of the great harlot that sat upon the many waters. Nothing was more familiar to readers of the Old Testament than the representation of idolatry under the name of harlotry or adultery. The idea originated in the fact that God had established his covenant with the Jews, declaring himself in a peculiar sense their God, and them in an equally peculiar sense his people, a relation symbolized as a marriage. To forsake him, therefore, and go after other gods, was an offense similar to that committed by an unfaithful wife against her husband. Hence, in general, idolatry came to be designated as adultery, and any city or people who committed it as a harlot. The term was thus applied to Nineveh (Nahum iii. 3), to Tyre (Isa. xxiii. 17), and to Babylon (Ezek. xxiii. 17). That there may be no doubt whatever as to who is meant, the angel (in verse 18) says expressly, she is "that great CITY which reigneth over the kings of the earth." In this sin all the tributary kingdoms of the empire are (verse 2) described as involved.

2. THE SCARLET BEAST AND ITS RIDER.

CHAPTER XVII. (3) And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness: and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. (4) And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication, (5) and upon her forehead a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. (6) And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder.

The scene chosen by the angel for the exhibition was a wilderness (not *the* wilderness), as if the spectacle was unfit to appear among the habitations of men. The wastes of the desert were the proper place in which to find monsters like this. Compare Isa. xiii. 21, 22; xxxiv. 13-15. There is shown a woman riding upon a scarlet-colored beast, i. e., of the hue of blood, bearing blasphemous titles, and having seven heads and ten horns; in other words, the same beast disclosed in Chapter xiii. 1. Her riding upon him may imply that the imperial power upheld the prosperity and grandeur of the city. She was arrayed in sumptuous robes, and decked with costly jewels betokening her riches, and carried in her hand the golden bowl of wine which intoxicated all who drank,—the seductive pleasures of idol

worship. Her diadem bore a title characterized as a "*Mystery*," i. e., showing that it had a secret meaning underneath the apparent one. The title was, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH," — the secret meaning of which was ROME. The woman had drank herself to intoxication with the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus.

3. THE ANGEL'S EXPLANATION.

CHAPTER XVII. (7) And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou wonder? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and the ten horns. (8) The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, *they* whose name hath not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall come. (9) Here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth: (10) and they are seven kings; the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a little while. (11) And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth into perdition. (12) And the ten horns that thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive authority as kings, with the beast, for one hour. (13) These have one mind, and they give their power and authority unto the beast. (14) These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they *also shall overcome* that are with him, called and chosen and faithful. (15) And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and mul-

titudes, and nations, and tongues. (16) And the ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her utterly with fire. (17) For God did put in their hearts to do his mind, and to come to one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished. (18) And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

The sight of this sickening monster filled the mind of the apostle with amazement. The revealing angel seeing this, proceeds to explain the vision. We have already, in connection with Chapter xiii., stated what seems to be the best solution of the very enigmatical language which follows. It is certainly a remarkable fact that a report or prophecy should have prevailed, that Nero after his death would revive, and claim the throne anew, but finally perish in attempting to gain it. For the sake of identifying him, therefore, though without indorsing the report, John may have referred to him as the "one that was and is not, and is to come back from Hades, and go into utter ruin," — a matter, he adds, which would cause admiring wonder to all his subjects except those whose names were registered in the book of life.

Then come yet more open explanations, to which the mind that had wisdom should attend. The seven heads of the beast represented the seven hills on which Rome was built. Of her

first seven emperors, five were dead, viz., Julius Cæsar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius; one, viz., Nero, is; the seventh, Galba, will follow Nero, but will continue but a short space, viz., seven months. Nero — the beast of the two lives — will be the eighth, but will perish. The ten horns are ten tributary kingdoms — enumerated by Gibbon as Spain, Gaul, Britain, Illyricum, Macedonia, Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, Africa. It is probable, however, that the word ten is not designed to be an exact, but a round number, *about* ten. These possess no kingdom now, i. e., no independent sovereignty, but receive power *as* kings, in other words, are allowed, in accordance with the Roman custom, to have their local or provincial governments in subordination to the empire. This, however, is for one hour, — in other words, a very short time, for soon Rome herself will fall, and her power over them will be broken. For the present they are loyal, and freely contribute of their resources and strength to the capital. They will join with it in hostility to Christ, but shall be defeated.

Afterward, these tributary kingdoms (verse 16) shall rebel against Rome, shall invade her territory, despoil her riches, and devastate the capital itself with fire and sword, — a prediction, as all know, which was literally fulfilled in the later days of the western empire. For under the over-

ruling providence of God, they agree in yielding the supreme power to the capital until God's purposes in regard to his people and his kingdom are fulfilled.

Finally, as if to complete the explanation, and put all possible doubt to rest, it is added expressly that the scarlet-arrayed harlot is the city that rules the world. The mention of the name Rome itself would not be more positive than this.

THE FALL OF BABYLON.

In the construction of the regular drama, scenes are often introduced called *moræ*, "delays," for the purpose of retarding the progress of the events, to give time for transactions which must be understood to have taken place but which cannot be brought into the representation; sometimes, too, as in highly-wrought tragedies, to afford a relief from intense emotion, and prepare the way for the final catastrophe. Such were the choruses in the old Greek tragedies, and the by-play of clowns in some of Shakespeare's master-pieces. Something similar to this, though of a higher order, is frequently employed in this highly dramatic Book of the Revelation. Most commonly it is in the form of songs of praise in view of disclosures already made, or of promises for the future, which serve not only to hold back the *denouement*, but also to awaken those senti-

ments of hope and gratitude and courage so appropriate to the suffering churches in the ordeal through which they were passing.

The present chapter seems to be of this nature. The seven angels have poured out their vials of wrath, and an angel interpreter has explained, cautiously, but with much fullness, *who* the persecuting harlot is that is about to receive her merited chastisement. But while we gaze in instant expectation of the fulfillment, another delay occurs which heightens the effect, though it retards the end. Three messages from heaven are sent with as many renewed assurances of the coming doom. It is as if, with the curtain still down, three heralds should pass in succession across the stage, each proclaiming the certainty and the completeness of the catastrophe which will be reached in the impending scene.

THE FIRST HERALD.

CHAPTER XVIII. (1) After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was lightened with his glory. (2) And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become a habitation of devils, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird. (3) For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen; and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness.

First, a mighty angel descends from heaven

clad in such effulgence that the whole earth is illuminated by it. He proclaims with a loud voice, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen!" — the repetition of the word adding strong emphasis, and the putting of it into the past tense showing its certainty, as if of a thing already done. And further, as if recalling the picture of the desolation of her ancient prototype sketched by Isaiah (Chap. xiii. 19-22), he adds, "and is become the habitation of demons, and the stronghold of every unclean spirit, and a cage of every impure and detestable bird." And then he recites her crime: "For all nations have participated in her corrupting idolatries; all kings have been in alliance with her, and all the rich and great of the empire have basked in the prosperity she has conferred on her flatterers and minions."

THE SECOND HERALD.

CHAPTER XVIII. (4) And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: (5) for her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. (6) Render unto her even as she rendered, and double *unto her* the double according to her works: in the cup which she mingled, mingle unto her double. (7) How much soever she glorified herself, and waxed wanton, so much give her of torment and mourning: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning. (8) Therefore in one day shall her plagues come, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly

burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God which judged her. (9) And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke of her burning, (10) standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. (11) And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth their merchandise any more; (12) merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stone, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet; and all thyine wood, and every vessel of ivory, and every vessel made of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble; (13) and cinnamon, and spice, and incense, and ointment, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and cattle, and sheep; and *merchandise* of horses and chariots and slaves; and souls of men. (14) And the fruits which thy soul lusted after are gone from thee, and all things that were dainty and sumptuous are perished from thee, and *men* shall find them no more at all. (15) The merchants of these things, who were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning; (16) saying, Woe, woe, the great city, she that was arrayed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearl! (17) for in one hour so great riches is made desolate. And every shipmaster, and every one that saileth any whither, and mariners, and as many as gain their living by sea, stood afar off, (18) and cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning, saying, What *city* is like the great city? (19) And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, wherein were made rich all that had their ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. (20) Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your judgment on her.

The second message is a voice from heaven it-

self, reverberating through the firmament, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." This, too, is modeled after similar warnings addressed to God's people in the days of the literal Babylon' (Isa. xlvi. 20; Jer. l. 8; li. 6, 9, 45); and its solemnity is heightened by the reminder thus made of the doom which befell that ancient enemy. Probably the original of the whole was in Lot's summons to leave Sodom on the morning of its destruction. Gen. xix. 12. This entire apostrophe reaching to verse 19, is in the highest degree poetic and impassioned. Verses 11, 19, seem patterned after Ezekiel's description of the lament for Tyre (Ezek. xxvii.), another of the ancient foes of God's people. The following notes of the verbal expressions employed will be useful.

Verse 6. *Render unto her*; apparently addressed to the retributive angels who were to execute the impending judgments upon the guilty city. — *Double to her*; compare Isa. xl. 2; lxi. 7. — Ver. 7. *How much*, i. e. in the same degree. — Ver. 8. *Death*; of her children; in other words, she shall be depopulated. — Ver. 9. *The kings*; the allied and tributary rulers of other countries which now formed part of the Roman Empire. — *Smoke of her burning*; compare Gen. xix. 28. — Ver. 10. *One hour*, suddenly and unexpectedly. — Ver.

11. *Shall weep.* The idea is that those in foreign lands who trafficked with Rome, sending thither the products of those lands, lament because she could buy of them no longer. — Ver. 12. *Thyine wood*; timber of the citron tree, an aromatic evergreen highly prized for ornamental wood-work. — Ver. 13. *Slaves*,—literally, *bodies*; an abbreviated way of designating persons who were bought and sold for purposes of manual labor. The next phrase, *souls of men*, also means slaves in a more general sense. Compare Ezek. xxvii. 13. This enumeration of articles of merchandise closely follows that given by the prophet in said chapter. — Ver. 14. *Thy soul.* The address now, in the ardor of composition, becomes personal. — Ver. 15. *The merchants*; before it was the *kings* that stood afar off. — Ver. 17. *Shipmaster*; because so extensive a commerce occupied a great amount of shipping. — Ver. 19. *Her costliness*; her lavishness in expenditure. With this verse ends the lament. The next is a call to the holy universe to rejoice in her downfall. — *Hath judged*; Her act of condemning you has been tried and condemned by him.

THE THIRD HERALD.

CHAPTER XVIII. (21) And a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all. (22) And the

voice of harpers and minstrels and flute players and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft, shall be found any more at all in thee; and the voice of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee: (23) and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the princes of the earth; for with thy sorcery were all the nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth.

The third message is sent by another angel, who not only reiterates the prediction of ruin, but emphasizes it by a most significant action; hurling a great millstone into the sea. *Sorcery*, practices which benumbed the conscience and seduced into idolatry.

RESPONSE FROM THE SAINTS.

CHAPTER XIX. (1) After these things I heard as it were a great voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God: (2) for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great harlot, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and he hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. (3) And a second time they say, Hallelujah. And her smoke goeth up for ever and ever.

To these repeated and emphatic declarations of the full and near destruction of their persecutor, the saints in glory respond with a song of thanksgiving—Ver. 1. *Alleluia*, the Greek form of the word Hallelujah, which occurs so often in the Psalms. It means, “Praise ye Jehovah!”—*Sal-*

vation; the deliverance of the church from her enemies. — Ver. 2. *Hath judged*; still spoken of as past to heighten the effect. — Ver. 3. *Her smoke*, following, as before, the pattern of Gen. xix. 28. — *For ever*; expressing the idea of irrevocable ruin.

RESPONSE FROM THE ELDERS AND LIVING ONES.

CHAPTER XIX. (4) And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God that sitteth on the throne, saying, Amen; Hallelujah.

In this song, the four Living Ones, as in Chap. v. 9, participate.

UNIVERSAL TRIUMPHAL SONG.

CHAPTER XIX. (5) And a voice came forth from the throne, saying, Give praise to our God, all ye his servants, ye that fear him, the small and the great. (6) And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. (7) Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

Then a voice from the Throne itself — undoubtedly the voice of the Lamb, — calls upon the entire holy Universe who serve God to join therein. The use of the expression, “*Our God*,” by the Lamb, is in accordance with Christ’s words in John xx. 17. — Ver. 6. *As it were*; resem-

bling. — *Reigneth*; *i. e.*, administers justice as King and Judge. The two functions of supreme power were joined in an ancient sovereign, and his acts are often spoken of interchangeably as laws, judgments, precepts, etc. See Ps. cxix. — Ver. 7. *Marriage*; the time has come when, her enemies being destroyed, the Lamb formally recognizes his persecuted and long despised church, and sets her in honor, as a bridegroom publicly takes to himself his bride. The figure is a favorite one in the Old Testament, especially in the Song of Solomon, and is henceforth used through the remainder of this book to denote the safety, the honor, and the happiness which will attend the church when her sufferings are over. — *Ready*; *i. e.*, by her faithfulness in enduring to the end. She has come through her long period of trial without a stain, in ever patient anticipation of its glorious termination, and now the Bridegroom is ready to receive her, to acknowledge her fidelity, and crown her as his own forever. And to show her in the greatest contrast with the impure and gaudily arrayed harlot which had corrupted the nations, it was granted to her to be clad, *i. e.*, to be *manifested* to all the universe, “in fine linen bright and pure, which is the righteousness of saints.”

PROCLAMATION OF THE MARRIAGE SUPPER.

CHAPTER XIX. (8) And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright *and* pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (9) And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are true words of God. (10) And I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.

To carry out the figure more perfectly, the auspicious event now so near should be celebrated with a wedding feast, and the evangelist was commanded to make proclamation of the honor and felicity of those who should be admitted to it. This was another word of cheer to those then suffering, and of encouragement to hold out to the joyous consummation.

And to add yet more weight to his declaration, the angel solemnly affirms that the message he brings is not his own; his words are the very words of God himself.

We cannot wonder that the apostle, on receiving such a message from so august a personage, fell at his feet with the intent to offer him adoration. His thought was instantly repelled by the angel, who replied that he was a servant likewise; one of those whose calling it was to testify of Jesus, for all prophecy of the future is simply tes-

timony concerning Jesus, his triumph over his foes, and the establishment, supremacy, and glory of his kingdom.

Glancing back, now, over the past five chapters, the question may suggest itself, why this repetition, in so many ways, of the single idea that persecuting Rome should be destroyed? The iteration seems almost wearisome. Can that be a true interpretation which runs so narrow a round of ideas as this? We reply; it may seem so to us, in these modern days of peace and uneventful ease, but it would not be such to those to whom the apostle sent these messages all fresh from the lips of the revealing angels. Let it only be remembered what Rome then was, in the insolence of her imperial power, with all the world prostrate at her feet, and what the church then was,—little bands of obscure and despised people scattered here and there, without power or prestige, the avowed followers of a Judæan peasant who had suffered a slave's punishment for crime. To assure these poor people that *they* were to triumph over *Rome*; Jesus to vanquish Cæsar; the hated cross to supplant the eagles upon the imperial standard; the rich temples of Jupiter and Venus and Bacchus to crumble into ruins before the rising churches and basilicas consecrated to the memory of the martyrs—to say this in a way to be *believed*; to afford real consolation, and fur-

nish the strong stimulus of courage and hope, and so buoy the suffering saints over the bloody waves of two and a half centuries, till the hour of deliverance should come,—to do all this, surely, required repetition, in every possible form of emphasis, with all the confirmation of significant gesture, and mighty voices, and solemn oaths. It was to be, in fact, the greatest revolution that the world ever saw, a revolution which, in the existing state of things, was to mere human view alike incredible and inconceivable. We have only to bear this in mind to see that these varied forms of utterance were needed, as they were admirably adapted for the purpose in view, and to find in them yet clearer evidence that our interpretation is a right one.

DESTRUCTION OF THE ARMIES OF THE BEAST.

It will be remembered that the progress of events as revealed to the apostle was suspended to give room for the appearance of the angel sent to explain the symbol of the scarlet-clad woman (Chap. xvii.), and also for the dirge of the kings and the merchants of the earth over the fall of the mystical Babylon (Chap. xviii.). Meanwhile, it is to be understood that the three unclean spirits sent forth by the Dragon, the Beast and the False Prophet, to stir up their tributary forces for the last conflict with Christianity (Chap. xvi. 13),

have accomplished their mission, and gathered a mighty host in the vale of Armageddon. The prototype of this mustering of the enemies was in the gathering of the Canaanite army under Sisera, at Megiddo, by the river Kishon, where they were utterly destroyed by Deborah and Barak. Judges iv.

The judgments of heaven have already been poured upon Rome and her allies by the angels of the seven vials, and now this last, most desperate attack of all the auxiliary powers of idolatry alone remains. It is to be remembered that the persecution of the Christians was not confined to Rome proper, or to the reign of Nero, but extended throughout the empire, and for a period of nearly or quite two hundred and fifty years, so that looking upon it collectively as a whole, it may well be described as a simultaneous assault by the combined forces of the Pagan world. It is the result of this great conflict which is depicted in the last part of the nineteenth chapter and the twentieth. It is divided as usual, into *seven* particulars or scenes.

1. The capture of the beast and false prophet, and their consignment to the lake of fire.
2. The slaughter of their entire army.
3. The seizure of the dragon, and his confinement in the abyss for one thousand years.
4. The special rewards conferred upon the martyrs during that period.

5. The release of the dragon, his enlistment of another army, viz., Gog and Magog, and their overthrow.

6. The final doom of the dragon to the lake of fire.

7. The judgment of the dead.

It seems scarcely necessary to remind our readers that these chapters comprise the most mysterious and difficult portions of the whole Book. We shall do our best at explaining them, but shall not be in the least surprised to be told we have failed. We shall address the common sense of our readers, aided by their knowledge of early and mediæval history, and will cheerfully abide their judgment "whether these things are so."

We have first a magnificent description of Christ as

THE LEADER OF HIS ARMIES.

CHAPTER XIX. (11) And I saw the heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon, called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. (12) And his eyes *are* a flame of fire, and upon his head *are* many diadems; and he hath a name written, which no one knoweth but he himself. (13) And he *is* arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood: and his name is called, The Word of God. (14) And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white *and* pure. (15) And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. (16) And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written. KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

The Seer beholds heaven opened, and a white war steed descending from it to the field of battle. Upon it was One designated as "Faithful and True," because he will execute the promises and threatenings he has made both to his friends and to his foes, whose contests and judgments are just. From his eyes are emitted lightning-gleams, and from his head depend the fillets of many diadems. There was a marked difference between an ancient crown and a diadem. The former, generally a simple wreath of leaves twisted about the head, or of gold twined with them, was not in itself a badge of royalty but of civic honor, success in battle, or in the games, or of convivial pleasure, etc. The diadem, which was a white fillet of linen worn on the head and hanging in a graceful knot behind, was a mark of imperial sovereignty, such as was displayed by the monarchs of the East, from whom it was derived. When adorned with jewels, and gathered in many folds, like a turban, it was the highest emblem of dignity and power known among nations. On the jeweled frontlet of his diadems Jesus has a *title* inscribed, the full import of which he alone knows, — that name is the LOGOS (Word) OF GOD. Compare John i. 1, 14. Over his vesture he wears the imperial mantle, not of purple, as denoting mere civic rule, but of crimson (dyed with blood), the symbol of war; a

figure probably derived from Isa. lxiii. 1-3, where the Messiah comes from Edom, his garments stained with the blood of his enemies. This glorious Being is attended with the armies of heaven, the hosts of angels, arrayed in shining white and riding upon white horses, the emblem of purity. This representation seems to accord with Matt. xvi. 27; xxiv. 30; xxv. 31, where Christ describes his own coming as King and Judge, "in his glory, with all his holy angels." His word of command is like a sharp sword, with which he will smite the rebel nations, and rule them with irresistible force ("a rod of iron." See Psalm ii. 9). He treadeth the wine-press of God's wrath against his enemies; i. e., is the instrument through whom the divine judgments will be executed upon them. See Chap. xiv. 18-20. Upon the skirt of his robe, so as to be conspicuous as he sits upon his horse, is the inscription claiming for him supreme and universal sovereignty, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON.

And now, in immediate anticipation of the battle, a herald angel standing in the sun makes proclamation to the carnivorous birds in all the sky to come and feast themselves upon the dead, the slain enemies of the King. It will be a great

feast spread for them by God; let them come and gorge themselves at their will. Dainty morsels will be afforded them, — kings and chiliarchs and braves, horses and their riders, nobles and vassals, small and great. Of course, this proclamation is to highten the effect. Similar calls were often uttered by ancient warriors just before battle. Compare 1 Sam. xvii. 46; Isa. xviii. 6; lvi. 9; Jer. vii. 33; xii. 9; especially Ezek. iv. 17-22.

And now all is ready, and the battle begins. But — there is no battle! Instantly the beast and the false prophet are seized, and thrust alive into the fiery lake of gehenna, and their vast army are slain by the word of the victorious King. The rapidity with which this is done is most impressive. It is the act of the Leader alone. The angels who attend him are merely witnesses of his prowess; he needs not the aid of one of them. He simply speaks, and it is done! The mighty hosts who had assembled against him disappear as by a single lightning stroke!

The import of all this, divested of the historical symbols under which it is presented, is simply that Paganism at Rome and throughout the world, as a persecuting force arrayed against the church of God, should be utterly destroyed. Of course, it does not mean Rome as a city, nor the people of Rome as such, nor even the civil government of Rome itself considered. The real

enemy which dwelt *in* Rome, and *actuated* her people and her power, was *heathenism*, just as the real enemy which clutched at our own national life in the late rebellion was *slavery*. We say that we fought the South and overcame it, and reduced it to submission, but we mean that we conquered slavery. We had no enmity against the South as a part of our own country, or against her people as American citizens; we fought them only as made our foes by that fell spirit of oppression which was hostile to all the institutions and interests of a land of freedom. So the real foe at Rome was its state religion, which, under the instigation of Satan, made war against the church of God; and the victory so sublimely described in our text was achieved when that foe was despoiled of its power, and all its instruments and auxiliaries utterly destroyed.

If we ask, then, whether the prophecy, thus understood, was in fact fulfilled, and when, the answer of history is most signal and definite,—it was, *in the conversion of the Emperor Constantine to Christianity, and his imperial decrees suppressing Paganism, and establishing Christianity as the religion of the empire, A.D. 306-324.*

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT.

“Was *that* all?” we fancy our readers exclaiming at the suggestion we venture to put forth as

to the real import of the great "Battle of Armageddon," described in Rev. xix. 11-21. After preparations so vast, which had so long occupied the counsels of heaven, and engaged the services of the highest angels,—after the display of Christ in his glory, going forth with the armies of heaven to victory over the assembled forces of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, and crushing them with so terrible a defeat, are we to find the fulfillment of the whole simply in that revolution wrought in the Roman Empire by the Emperor Constantine? An event wholly within the range of human history, which was attended with no imposing supernatural phenomena, no disclosure of Christ and his angels amid the clouds of the firmament, no conflagrations of the heavens, and no mighty convulsions of the solid earth; an event whose grandeur is to be seen only in its moral significance, and its bearing upon that invisible and spiritual kingdom of heaven which had been founded in the cross of Christ? The very statement will doubtless seem to many its own refutation. Take away from their fulfillment the *physical* prodigies and signs and wonders which prophetic inspiration used so freely in its symbols, and, they will say, we have no Apocalypse left. The *denouement*, which had been looked for with so much solemn awe, is emptied of its meaning, and both prophecy and performance become stale, flat, and unprofitable.

We will not stop here to dwell upon the serious detriment to the principles of sound biblical interpretation, which, as we cannot help thinking, has resulted from this habit, so greatly fostered by the millennial literature of our day, of expecting material and sensuous fulfillments of New Testament prophecy. For the present, it is sufficient to say that the supposed estimate of the real magnitude of the revolution effected by Constantine results from ignorance or a want of consideration of what that revolution was. Let us endeavor in a few words to gain some just ideas of it.

Rome, in the apostles' days, was the mistress of the earth. From the shores of Spain and Britain on the west to the Indus on the east, and from Ethiopia in the south to Scythia on the north, over all the nations, tribes, and tongues of the known world, she held imperial sway. Her legions garrisoned and guarded every stronghold; her treasury was replenished with the revenues of every land. One system of laws bound the whole into a consolidated empire, at the head of which was a single irresponsible will, a sovereign who assumed the name and the prerogatives of the Deity, and was worshiped as such by his subjects.

For two and a half centuries this mighty empire had set itself in deadly hostility to Christianity. A succession of forty emperors, from

Nero to Diocletian, with some few exceptions, wielded this power to crush the infant churches. Even the upright Antonine and the philosophic Aurelius, with no personal malice against the followers of Jesus, punished them as enemies of the state, and disturbers of public order. The Pagan religion, with a splendid array of priests, augurs, soothsayers, and vestal virgins, with magnificent temples and imposing rites of worship, the whole made sacred and venerable by the traditions of almost a thousand years, inspired the zeal of the enemies of the church, while it gave its sanctions to all the atrocities that were perpetrated in its behalf. Wealth, aristocracy, fashion, art, ancient custom, trade, education, all the forces of society, and over and above all the moral corruption which grew up in, and was fostered by, heathenism, were alike hostile to a faith which tended to revolutionize them all. Such was Rome in its antagonism to Christianity. The prophetic symbol by which she was represented — frightful as it was — but faintly imaged the reality — a huge unearthly beast, with seven heads and ten horns, and a body combining the strength and swiftness of the leopard, the bear, and the lion, instigated and guided by the great red dragon of hell !

Yet in one reign, by the will of one man, this mighty enemy of Christ and the church was laid low ! By a succession of decrees, breaking forth

upon the astonished world like thunderbolts out of the clear sky, persecution was suppressed, Christians were granted perfect liberty of opinion and worship, confiscated property was restored to them, demolished churches rebuilt, Christianity made the state religion, the cross inscribed on the imperial standards and impressed on the imperial coins,—in a word, the empire was made Christian. Nay, more, Rome herself, the bloody city of Nero and Domitian and Diocletian, the place of the Mamertine prison and the imperial gardens, which had once been lighted with burning Christians as torches, and the Coliseum, where the wild beasts had been gorged with the flesh of the martyrs,—Rome was abandoned of its emperor, and given over to decay and the plunder of the northern barbarians, and a new capital built in the East on the beautiful Bosphorus, which should ever after bear in its very name the memory of the first Christian emperor, Constantine. And though he did not himself attempt to extirpate heathenism by force, yet it was done shortly after by his successors. The Pagan temples were demolished, the heathen rites prohibited, and the whole vast system of superstition on whose bloody altars so many thousands of Christians had perished was by imperial edict totally suppressed.

Was not such a result as this worthy to be

styled "the victory of Armageddon"? We beg the reader to pause and reflect a little on its significance. By what less than the power of the enthroned Redeemer, acting in and through this human representative, could it have been accomplished? By what else was the revolution made permanent in its effects, so that there was no fatal reaction from it? President Edwards, one of the most judicious of writers, says, "This revolution was *the greatest revolution and change in the face of things that ever came to pass in the world since the flood*. Satan, the prince of darkness, that king and god of the heathen world, was cast out. The roaring lion was conquered by the Lamb of God in the strongest dominion that ever he had, the Roman empire." (Work of Redemption, Period III., part 2).

We regret our want of space to give an adequate sketch of this celebrated emperor. He was born in the year 274, and upon the death of his father he was proclaimed Cæsar by the Roman army, at York, in England, in 306. At that time the empire was divided among six sovereigns, who parcelled out its vast territories among them. Dissensions arose among them, which led to a long series of wars, from which Constantine finally emerged, the conqueror of all. It was while engaged with one of these, Maxentius, that he saw the famous vision to which he attributed

his ultimate conversion. "According to his own account," says Uhlhorn, "he long considered to which god he should turn for help, and prayed to the supreme God, whom his father had worshiped as god of the sun, to reveal to him who he was. Then there appeared to him one day a wondrous sign. When the sun was declining in the west, he saw a bright cross upon the sun, and over it the inscription, in letters of light, TOUTO NIKA (In this conquer). He was disturbed by the vision, and not clear what its meaning might be; but in the night Christ appeared to him, and commanded him to make this cross his banner, and then to go into battle with the certainty of victory. In fulfillment of this prediction, Constantine had a banner prepared (the *labarum*) bearing the cross and the monogram of Christ. He himself set a cross on his helmet, and his soldiers painted it upon their shields. Then he led his army from victory to victory under the banner of the cross, until in the bloody battle of the Milvian Bridge the power of Maxentius was entirely broken. Constantine entered Rome in triumph, and soon the whole West acknowledged his sway. In token of his gratitude for this result, the emperor had a statue of himself set up in Rome, carrying a cross in his hand, and bearing the inscription, "By this saving sign, the true proof of valor, I have freed your city, and saved it from the yoke of the tyrant."

The great decree of Constantine, by which he made Christianity the religion of the empire, was issued in the year 324, after he had, by the defeat of Licinius, become sole monarch both of the West and the East. The year following he convened a general council of the bishops and clergy, to settle points of doctrine and practice in the church. This was the famous council of Nice, which first condemned the heresy of Arianism. The emperor himself attended its sessions, and gave the imperial sanction to its decrees. We cannot refuse a quotation from Dean Stanley's account of this renowned council, as presenting most vividly the changes which had come upon the condition both of the church and the empire.

"There were present the learned and the illiterate, courtiers and peasants, old and young, aged bishops on the verge of the grave, beardless deacons just entering on their office; and it was an assembly in which the difference between age and youth was of more than ordinary significance, for it coincided with a marked transition in the history of the world. The new generation had been brought up in peace and quiet. They could just remember the joy diffused through the Christian communities by the edict of toleration published in their boyhood; but they had themselves suffered nothing. Not so the older and by far the larger part of the assembly. They had lived

through the last and worst of the persecutions, and they now came like a regiment out of some frightful siege or battle, decimated and mutilated by the tortures or the hardships they had undergone. There must have been some of the aged inhabitants of Nicæa who remembered the death of the two martyrs, Tryphon and Respicius, who in the reign of Decius had been dragged through the streets of the city, bleeding from their wounds, in the depths of winter. There must be some who retained from their grandfathers the recollection of that still earlier and more celebrated persecution in Bithynia, recorded by Pliny in his letter to Trajan. Most of the older members must have lost a friend or a brother. Many still bore the marks of their sufferings. Some uncovered their sides and backs to show the wounds inflicted by the instruments of torture. On others were the traces of that peculiar cruelty which distinguished the last persecution, the loss of a right eye, or the searing of the sinews of the leg to prevent their escape from working in the mines. Both at the time and afterward it was on their character as an army of confessors and martyrs, quite as much as on their character as an Œcumenical Council, that their authority reposed. In this respect, no other council could approach them, and in the whole proceedings of the assembly, the voice of an old confessor was received almost as an oracle." *Eastern Church*, pp. 185, 186.

Think of Nero burning Christians alive as torches in his palace gardens, and then of Constantine presiding in such a council as this, and see what Christ's victory over the Beast and the False Prophet meant !

THE BINDING OF SATAN.

CHAPTER XX. (1) And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. (2) And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, (3) and cast him into the abyss, and shut *it*, and sealed *it* over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time.

In attempting to elucidate this exceedingly obscure subject, we ask our readers, first of all, to disregard the chapter division by which this passage is separated from what precedes. Every one knows that there is no authority for these divisions in the original, and the influence of them is often very detrimental to a clear understanding of the sacred text, breaking apart what really should be held in closest continuity. The present is a marked example of this, very many writers taking it for granted that this chapter begins a new subject, whereas a careful consideration will clearly show that it is strictly and intimately connected with the overthrow of the enemies of the church, given in the foregoing chapter. In other words,

the seizure and binding of the Dragon was a part of the great battle of Armageddon, in which the conquering Messiah overcomes and destroys the combined armies which had been gathered against him.

For, let it be remembered that the persecutions which Rome had for two and a half centuries been inflicting upon Christians were *the Dragon's warfare against the saints*. See Ch. xii. 13, 17; xiii. 7; xvi. 13, 14. "The Dragon persecuted the woman — the church — which brought forth the man-child." "The Dragon was wroth, and went to *make war* with the remnant of her seed." "It was given to him," i. e., the beast, the Dragon's agent, to whom he gave his power and throne and great authority, — "to *make war* with the saints and to overcome them." The three unclean spirits like frogs, which came out of the mouths of the Dragon and the Beast and the False Prophet — the Dragon's instruments of cruelty — went forth to gather the kings of the earth and of the whole world to *the battle* of that great day of God Almighty. And when, in Chap. xix., the Messiah comes forth against that host, and gives its flesh to the ravenous birds, and seizes the Beast and False Prophet and thrusts them into the lake of fire, it is *the destruction of the Dragon's army*, his marshals and his troops. And it is now simply the completion of the victory that a mighty angel

appears on the scene with his key and chain, and lays hold on the COMMANDER of that army, the Prince of Hell, who had created and instigated it with his own devilish hate, and guided all its movements for so many years, and binds and shuts him up in prison. The verses preceding (in Ch. xix.) are the *Waterloo* of this campaign; these are the *St. Helena*, where the arch enemy and tyrant is put into a place of safety in which for a thousand years, at least, he can wage war against the church no more.

Such, clearly, is the connection of this event, and from it we have the clew to its interpretation. If *persecution* was the wicked thing which the Dragon had been doing; if the whole prophetic narrative is the story of his deeds and his endeavors against the saints; if it is in this character alone that he is shown, then, most certainly, to bind him and shut him up, so that he can pursue his murderous work no longer, is simply the *suppression of persecution*. And we know that precisely this was what was done under Constantine. Paganism was disarmed and despoiled. The fagot, the rack, the bloody pincers, were snatched from its cruel hand. Its dungeons were thrown open, its wild beasts starved of their wonted feasts on Christian flesh. Nay, more, the imperial scepter itself passed into Christian hands. The old bloody, barbarous Rome was left in her poi-

sonous marshes by the Tiber, with the curse of heaven resting on her, and a new Rome, the capital of a new Christian empire, planted in the East, the national emblem of which was the cross and the name of Jesus wrought into the sacred monogram of the *labarum*, impressed on her coins, and borne in triumph on the standards of her invincible armies! Was not this a *binding* of the arch-persecutor? So, for a thousand years from that day, under the sway of this renowned Christian empire of the East, what power was there in all the world strong enough to assail the church? The barbarian tribes of the North did indeed overrun old Rome, plundered its wealth, and parceled out its territories, as John himself predicted in this very book,—"the ten horns shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire" (Chap. xvii. 16); but they had no power to endanger Christianity, nay, here first brought into contact with it, many of them received its divine teachings, and ultimately became Christian nations. Contrast now all this, both in the East and in the West, with what the empire was when in the flush of its Pagan supremacy, its scepter in the hands of Nero, and wielded to crush the despised followers of Jesus, and can we help saying that the Dragon was bound and shut up in prison?

It is a striking confirmation of this view, that, at the time, both Constantine and the church regarded the revolution which he wrought as the fulfillment of this very chapter. Close by the entrance to his palace in Constantinople he caused to be set up an immense painting, in full view of all who went out or came in, representing himself with the cross over his head, and under his feet a writhing serpent falling into the abyss. "For," says Eusebius, "the sacred oracles in the books of God's prophets have described him as a dragon and a crooked serpent; and for this reason the emperor thus publicly displayed a painting of the dragon beneath his own and his children's feet, stricken through with a dart, and cast headlong into the depths of the sea. In this manner he intended to represent that concealed adversary of the human race, and to indicate that he was consigned to the gulf of perdition by virtue of the trophy of salvation placed above his head." (Life of Const. 1. 40.)

Our readers will judge of the reasonableness of this view of the passage before us, a view which, we think, will be further confirmed by what will hereafter be said of the matters standing in connection with it. That it differs, in toto, from the usual view is freely acknowledged. The latter makes it descriptive of a period of universal peace and felicity to be attained in the future, lasting a

thousand years, or an indefinitely long period, that is to say, the *Millennium*, a word meaning “a thousand years.” But while we do not in the least doubt that such a period of prosperity lies before the church, as assured in all the predictions of her latter-day glory, we cannot think that that is the subject of this passage. In the first place, it assumes that this chapter is wholly disconnected with the preceding, introducing a new and totally different subject. Secondly, it assumes that the confinement of the Dragon or Satan implies the cessation of *all* moral evil, which in the Scriptures is so often attributed to his agency. But this, too, is wholly to disregard the connection. The passage manifestly speaks of the Dragon in reference to the character he sustains in this book, and that is solely that of a *persecutor*. Thirdly, it represents great and innumerable nations of men in the distant parts of the earth as still heathen during the thousand years, which, if this period is the church’s latter-day glory, is wholly inconsistent with those prophecies which represent the reign of Christ as absolutely universal. (Compare Ps. lxxii. 8, 11; Mal. i. 11, etc.) These, to us, seem insuperable objections to the common view. We do not see how they could ever have been derived from a careful study of the passage *in its connections*. The one which we prefer is in consistency with those connections, and also with

the known facts of history, and the most reasonable view of the objects and methods of the Revelation itself. It is directly connected with that great period of persecutions which was then just beginning, and whose dark penumbra was shutting rapidly down over the apostle and the infant churches. In a word, it was a view of the utmost practical interest and importance to the churches of that day, and therefore appropriately had a place in the narrative of "those things which must shortly come to pass."

THE REIGN OF THE MARTYRS.

CHAPTER XX. (4) And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them : and *I saw* the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshiped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand ; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (5) The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection. (6) Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection : over these the second death hath no power ; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Probably no passage in the whole Bible ever received so many different interpretations as these three verses. They have been made to uphold theories innumerable in respect to the future of the saints and of our world. We shall not

attempt to mention these, but proceed at once to unfold that view which of all we have seen seems to us most reasonable — a view which nearly coincides with the one presented by the eminent evangelical interpreter of Germany, Prof. Hengstenberg. This scholar was one of the intimate and much esteemed friends of the late Prof. Henry B. Smith, who says of him, “More than any other man in Germany he is like one of the prophets of the Old Testament, warning, rebuking, threatening in the name of the Lord. He is striving with his whole might to stem the encroachments and to repel the pretensions of philosophy in Germany; he is striving to save the Old Testament for Germany as a book of divine authority, and his cause wins ground.”

1. Our first inquiry is, *Who were these martyrs?* Nor should there be any doubt as to the answer. They were “the souls of them that were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and such as worshiped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead or upon their hand.” The words refer us directly to chapter thirteen. They are those who had, under penalty of death, refused to worship the Roman emperor, or receive the tokens of conformity to the heathen religion, of which he was the head. In the original this distinctive idea is more prominent than in our English dress. The

word "beheaded" (*pepelekismenon*) is derived from the ax or hatchet (*pelekus*), which was the Roman instrument of capital punishment, and signifies literally, "those who were *hatcheted*." So the early colonists of New England made a verb out of the Indian war-club, the *tomahawk*. If a writer of those times had said that in a given conflict so many persons were *tomahawked*, no one would have doubted that he meant to say, not only that they were put to death, but that it was done by *Indians*. So here, the persons seen were those who had suffered from the *Roman* ax, or who, if not actually put to death, had been exposed to it for their fearless confession of Christ and the word of God. How they can be made to mean all Christians in all ages of the world, according to the views of millenarians generally, surpasses our comprehension.

2. *The time of their reign*. It was "a thousand years"; manifestly *the same* thousand years as that during which Satan was bound. Nearly all writers concede this. If what we have advanced in the preceding pages is correct, that period lay between Constantine, who put an end to Roman persecution, and Othman I., who let loose the horrors of Turkish persecution. That period of a thousand years was one in which Christianity, instead of being weak and assailed by hostile secular power, possessed the throne of

the Roman world. In it the banner of the Cross was triumphant between the Image of Cesar and the Crescent of Mohammed. The celestial sign emblazoned by Constantine on the *labarum*, and set up over his imperial palace, had been fulfilled, IN THIS THOU SHALT CONQUER.*

3. In this, then, we have a clew to *the reigning of the martyrs in heaven*. For the comfort of the persecuted churches, John was permitted to assure them of a coming period of triumph over their enemies, when the arch-persecutor should be shut up in prison for a thousand years, when Christ and his cross should occupy the throne of the Cæsars. "But what," his contemporaries might ask him, "is there *for us*? We shall not live to see that good time; the dungeon, the stake, the ax, are our portion, what shall we have therefore?" Is it any wonder that in reply to such an inquiry the apostle recalled the very same question which he himself and his brother apostles had put to Christ, and the answer he had given them, "In the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of

*Hengstenberg holds that the thousand years are past, but makes their precise date somewhat different from this. He thinks the binding of Satan occurred at the conversion of Charlemagne, in the year A.D. 800. The thousand years, then, would reach to A.D. 1800, when military despotism and infidelity broke forth with desperate force, as Gog and Magog. "It is such a conjunction as that of Napoleon and Apollyon." Apoc. II., page 369.

Israel." Matt. xix. 28. That is, while Christ shall reign in his church over his enemies on earth, his faithful martyrs and confessors shall reign with him in glory on thrones above. It shall be a special reward for special fidelity.

Let us look at the passage in its details. The apostle stands gazing into heaven, where he sees thrones, persons sitting upon them, and judicial (or royal, for ruling and judging are the same) dignity given to them. As he gazes, the scene thus outlined takes a more definite form and import; the persons sitting on the thrones are the martyrs of the Roman persecutions. Instead of having perished under the malice of their enemies, he beholds them still living and reigning with Christ, as he had promised. This, he says, is the first resurrection. Not the *act* of rising, for no such act is shown, but the resurrection *state* to which they had already attained, and by means of which it had become possible for them to be *with* Christ, who at his ascension entered his resurrection state. It is first, not in the order of time, but of rank and blessedness, just as the uppermost rooms at feasts were the *first* rooms; the best robe for the prodigal was the *first* robe; Philippi, the chief city of Macedonia, was the *first* city; Paul, the chief of sinners, was the *first* of sinners, etc. See, also, Matt. xx. 27; Mark vi. 21; x. 44; Luke xix. 47; Acts xiii. 50; xxv. 2; xxviii. 7, 17.

He then adds, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first (highest) resurrection; on such the second death (ver. 14) hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ," i. e., admitted into their most intimate presence, "and shall reign with him a thousand years." Of course, we are not to infer that after that period this honor is to cease. The thousand years are named only to make this period of triumph coeval with that of Satan's humiliation and confinement.

"But the rest of the dead lived not (again) until the thousand years were finished." By the rest must be meant those not included among the martyrs; i. e., those who *did* serve the beast and worship his image, and receive his mark. They did not live (the word *again* is unauthorized), i. e., they did not have the life and blessedness of the martyrs. Every one knows that the word to live in the Scriptures often means to be blessed. It is to have the *everlasting life* which alone belongs to the saints. Till the thousand years were finished does not mean that they then *did* so live, but, as with the reign of the martyrs the state spoken of extended *through* the period of Satan's confinement. What happened to these after that is stated further on, in verses 11-15.

This passage then, viewed in its connections, seems to us most evidently to teach the well known doctrine of peculiar dignity and happiness

bestowed upon those who laid down their lives for the sake of Christ. This truth had been taught by our Lord himself in the passage already quoted (Matt. xix. 28), and was repeated in various forms by the apostles. Paul declares that it had become a proverbial saying (*logos*) among the early Christians — a saying which he pronounces a true one — “If we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with him; if we *suffer*, we shall also *reign* with him.” 2 Tim. ii. 12. He says that “we (all Christians) are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, *if so be that we suffer with him*, that we may be also *glorified together*.” See also the special promise made by our Lord to the seven churches, “To him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father”; i. e., he shall share in my royal authority as predicted in the second Psalm. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne.” Rev. ii. 26, 27; iii. 21.

The reign of the martyrs thus interpreted falls into harmony with the great events with which it stands connected in this book, and with the recognized teachings of the whole New Testament as to

the rewards assured to those who should be faithful unto death. It presents a simple and natural sense, free from the extravagances which attend the usual millenarian theories. We cannot but feel that it will commend itself to all unprejudiced readers, as one eminently reasonable, and worthy of acceptance as the true one.

GOG AND MAGOG.

CHAPTER XX. (7) And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, (8) And shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. (9) And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down out of heaven, and devoured them. (10) And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

After a thousand years, Satan should be loosed from his confinement and go forth to collect another army to institute a new warfare against the saints. The name by which they are designated is "Gog and Magog." Let us first see if we can discover who were meant by them.

As usual in this book, the description of it comprises *seven* particulars.

1. It was to appear one thousand years after the binding of Satan.

2. Its designation was Gog and Magog.
3. It was to originate in distant regions, called "the four quarters of the earth."
4. Its numbers were vast — as the sand of the sea.
5. It should overrun the whole breadth of the earth, or land.
6. It should encompass the camp of the saints and the beloved city.
7. It should be destroyed by fire from heaven.

Can we find any power on the pages of history answering to these seven particulars? Let us see.

We have shown, as we think, in former articles, that the character in which Satan, or the Dragon, is exhibited in this book is that of a *persecutor*; i. e., an instigator of the hostile powers of the earth against Christianity. This work he was permitted to continue in Rome more than two and a half centuries, from the commencement of the persecutions under Nero, in A.D. 64, to Constantine's degree of toleration in the West in 312, or for the whole empire in 324. These decrees, with the laws which enforced them, completely suppressed persecution, and were followed shortly after by the substitution of Christianity for Paganism, as the established religion of the empire. We submit that this was *the binding of Satan*.

1. Coming down one thousand years from that

date, we behold the *founding of a new antichristian, persecuting power, the Mohammedan Ottoman Empire*. The date of this event is assigned by Gibbon and historians generally to the year 1326, when Othman I., the first Sultan, invaded and plundered the Christian province of Nicomedia, and established his capital at Brusa. This was exactly *one thousand and two years* from the issue of the imperial decree of Constantine. From Othman, the line of Turkish Sultans and the people themselves have been commonly styled *Othmans*, or *Ottomans*. We must refer our readers to the history of this empire in proof of its hostility to Christianity. It plundered, sold into slavery, and murdered without stint the followers of the cross. It has for more than three centuries occupied the territories of the Eastern church, and has exercised a pitiless despotism over them. Christians, in the Mohammedan phrase, are “unbelieving dogs,” whom it is a service to Allah and his Prophet to put to death. Within a few years past the empire has been falling into decadence, and is held in awe of the powerful nations of Christendom. It is now known as “the sick man,” whose end may be reached at any moment. But looking at it in its essential characteristics, and as it has in fact been during its long career of fanaticism and oppression, it may well be viewed as the legitimate successor of Pagan Rome, a new

power stirred up by the persecuting Dragon against the followers and the religion of Jesus Christ.

2. Its name, "*Gog and Magog*." From Gen. x. 2, we learn that Magog was the son of Japheth, who with his brothers settled in the northern regions of Europe and Asia, and became progenitors of the tribes known in general as *Scythians*. In the days of the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. xxxviii. 1), it appears that *Gog* was the ruler of that people—probably the name being the common title of its kings, like Pharaoh in Egypt, and Cæsar at Rome.*

One of those Scythian tribes in later times was the *Turks*, who began to be heard of in Europe about the sixth century, a horde of barbarians who overran nearly all Asia, and at length, in the fourteenth century, having meanwhile embraced the tenets of Mohammedanism, founded as already mentioned, the Ottoman empire. Historically, therefore, it is as certain as any similar ethnological fact, that the Turks were descendants of ancient Magog. In what way, then, could they be more naturally designated by a prophet writing thirteen centuries before their time than by this name of their ancestor and native land? Such

*In the cuneiform inscriptions at Babylon, "we find side by side with Birighudri, a chief of Madai (Media), Sariti and Pariza, sons of *Ga-a-gi*, a chief of the Saka (Scythians), whom Mr. Smith identifies with *Gog*." Speaker's Com. Ezek. xxxviii 2.

was the opinion of the learned Grotius, who expressly says, "*Per Gogum intelligenda domus Ottomanicæ quæ primum in ex parte Asiæ se ostendit.*" (By Gog is to be understood the Ottoman family who first showed themselves in that part of Asia.)

3. That the widespread territories of the Turks, before they became fixed in their new empire in Asia Minor, might be described as being in "the four quarters of the earth," is too obvious to need proof. In the time of the great Mogul empire of Zingis Khan (about 1206), they covered nearly all Asia and a large part of Europe. No phrase would more graphically depict the vast extent of their conquests than the one used by the apostle.

4. So, likewise, the assertion that their number was "as the sand of the sea." A very common epithet applied to these hordes of barbarians who overran so large part of the world, and made incursions so often into the more fertile countries of the South, was that they were "innumerable."

5. That the invading Turks overran "the whole breadth of the earth," or, as we suppose, the *land*, i. e., Palestine, is too well known to require proof. We have repeatedly noted this use of the word earth, not only in this book, but frequently in the other New Testament books. It is a use recognized by all commentators. It is equally true, however, taken in its wider sense. The conquests

of the Turks were so extensive that they might with little exaggeration be described as covering the whole breadth of the earth.

6. They surrounded "the beloved city" and "the camp of the saints." By the former is to be understood, of course, Jerusalem. It was taken by the Turks under Sultan Selim I., in 1517, and has been in their hands ever since. The latter, as we think, was the fortified Christian capital, Constantinople itself, which after a prolonged and most bloody siege, was taken by Mahomet II., in 1460. Besides the slaughter of thousands in the siege, great numbers of the captives were massacred or sold into perpetual slavery, the churches were burned or converted into mosks, and the city of the first Christian emperor made the capital of Islam.

7. The end of this bloody persecutor was announced in the words, "Fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them." If our view as to the identity of this power is correct, this part of the prediction is yet to be fulfilled. The form of the infliction may be interpreted as meaning that some sudden judgment shall put an end to the empire, as if smitten by lightning; or that its power shall be dissipated under the influence of those spiritual truths and forces which shall descend like the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Or possibly, both may be included, as in

the baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire, which John the Baptist denounced upon Jerusalem, and which in both ways we know was so signally fulfilled. We cannot doubt that this end of the Ottoman power, in one form or the other, or both, is now near at hand. Turkey is "the sick man," and is constantly growing weaker. He already exists only by the sufferance of the great Christian powers, who have wrested from him the old weapons of persecution, and will extinguish him altogether if he attempts further outrage, while missions and schools and the thousand influences of Christian civilization are sapping his life-forces, and preparing for a repetition of the revolution in old Rome, by which the persecutor himself became a subject of the cross.

Here, then, are seven characteristic particulars which indicate to us the power that was meant by the apostle under the name "Gog and Magog." Six of them we see fit most exactly to the empire of the Turks, and the seventh gives every sign of a fulfillment very speedily. What other theory has been framed on this subject which combines so many evidences of being the right one?

THE JUDGMENT OF THE DEAD.

CHAPTER XX. (11) And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. (12) And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing

before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. (13) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. (14) And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, *even* the lake of fire. (15) And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

We have come to the last scene of the great tragedy. Save a single class, all the persons and characters which have figured in the warfare of Satan against the church of God have been disposed of. The Roman Beast and False Prophet, and all the forces gathered by them from the heathen world, perished in the battle of Armageddon, and were sent to their own place in the lake of fire. Gog and Magog, who a thousand years later took up the same *role* of hostility against the saints, have been destroyed by fire from heaven. Satan himself, the Arch-enemy who instigated the whole, has been, so far as his power to persecute went, finally vanquished, and sent to join his instruments and victims in the lake of fire. The martyrs and confessors, who under all assaults held fast their fidelity, have ascended their thrones, and are enjoying the special honors and felicities of the first, i. e., the highest resurrection life. All have passed from the stage but a single class called *the dead*.

Who are these? The answer is almost univer-

sally assumed to be, all mankind. The passage is taken to be a description of the general judgment, at which the whole family of man will stand together to receive sentence at God's tribunal, at the end of time. It will doubtless seem sheer presumption even to question a belief so wide-spread and deep-rooted in the minds of men. Still a few inquiries may be pardoned.

1. How happens it that, if this is the description of the general judgment, no mention is made of *the living* as appearing in the great assemblage? Paul distinctly affirms that Christ "shall judge the quick (the living) and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" (2 Tim. iv. 1). And Peter, "Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead" (1 Pet. iv. 5). And in 1 Thess. iv. 15-17, express mention is made of those "which are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord," and that these should be caught up together with the risen dead to meet the Lord in the air. Why is there no allusion to these here? On the face of it, this is a judgment of the dead only. Four times are these mentioned, as if by repetition to emphasize that fact. "I saw *the dead* stand before God"—"*the dead* were judged"—"*the sea* gave up *the dead*"—"death and hell delivered up *the dead*," and "*they* were judged every man according to their works." Does it look as if this were the same transaction described by Paul and Peter?

2. What is there in the connections of this passage to require it to be understood of the general judgment? The subject of the preceding chapters had been persecution, — Jewish, Pagan, and Mohammedan warfare against the church. This up to the verse next preceding this passage (xx. 10) had most clearly been the topic in view. It had not been the character or conduct of mankind at large. Why this abrupt transition to something both in time and import far remote from the matter in hand?

It will, of course, be said that the topics of this 20th chapter are commonly understood as relating, all of them, to the future, — the binding of Satan, the reign of the martyrs, the irruption of Gog and Magog, etc., and that the general judgment appropriately follows these. We cannot here repeat what has been said to show the error of this assumption. It is based upon the theory that the book, contrary to its own most explicit and oft-repeated declarations, is designed to be a prophetic history of all time, rather than of events near at hand, “things which must shortly come to pass.” We find it impossible to ignore these most clearly asserted facts as to the design and scope of the Revelation, or to disregard them in venturing to determine the meaning of a passage so important as this.

The clew to the true import is, we think, to be found in the verses preceding. In verse 5, it is

said that "the *rest* of the dead lived not" during the thousand years. These are such as were not included among the martyrs and confessors who "lived" during that period. It must follow, therefore, that they were those who *did* "worship the beast and his image, and did receive his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands," in other words, the heathen, and those who, though nominally Christians, under the stress of persecution, apostatized and yielded to the demands of idolatry. As before remarked, these remain undisposed of. Those who had been put to death for their fidelity have attained their reward, and are reigning with Christ. The rest of the dead are now to receive *their* trial and final award.

These exigencies of the passage have controlled the views of some of the ablest scholars. One of these was the great Grotius, who spoke of it as describing the punishment of *some antecedent to the general judgment*, as the glory of the martyrs precedes that judgment (*quorundam pœna judicium illud ultimum antecedit, sicut martyrum gloria antecedit idem judicium*). Hengstenberg is yet more explicit. "The dead can only be the ungodly dead. An unseasonable comparison of Matt. xxv. 31-46, where we find the righteous and the wicked united in one scene of judgment, has here been productive of much confusion, and has led to the dead being generally viewed as all the dead without exception." And Paræus, "By the rest

of the dead are understood all others, the martyrs and confessors excepted, who embraced not the testimony of Jesus in all this time, but were either professed enemies of Christ, as Jews and Pagans without the church, or false Christians, or anti-Christians in the church."

This judgment scene, then, is analogous to the one described by Daniel. We give the two side by side, both from the Revised Version :

DANIEL VII. 9-11.

I beheld till thrones were placed, and One that was Ancient of days did sit; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool: his throne was fiery flame, and the wheels thereof burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set and the books were opened. I beheld at that time because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake; I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and he was given to be burned with fire.

REV. XX. 11-14.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, *even* the lake of fire.

Daniel's vision, like John's, had been that of a great persecuting power, under the figure of a hideous Beast, which made war with the saints, and for a while prevailed against them. He was at length arrested, brought to judgment for his crimes, and cast into retributive fire. How natural that the Apostle, who probably imitated the prophet in representing this later persecutor under the like figure of a beast, should continue the parallel by depicting a similar judgment for the punishment of him and his allies. Both of them set forth in the most impressive imagery the condemnation of these enemies of God and his people, and their doom to everlasting fire. Both are included, doubtless, in that great judicial administration of our Lord over the world which extends to all beings and all events, but are not precisely identical with it. Each is *a* judgment of the ungodly, but neither is *the* general judgment. Of the former, Prof. Cowles says, "The general final judgment is not in place here; would have no connection with the subject in hand; is not indicated by anything said in the context, or by the nature of the subject. On the contrary, an allusion to God's providential judgments upon guilty nations *is* in place here, precisely so, being the very thing that such blasphemous hostility to his kingdom and people calls for and should lead us to expect." If we have not

wholly mistaken the nature and intent of this latter scene, the same remarks apply equally well to this.

A few notes on the phraseology of the passage will be of service.

Ver. 11. **WHITE THRONE**; the white symbolical of purity.—**FLED AWAY**; language expressive of the infinite majesty of the Judge. It is often taken as relating to the burning up of the heavens and the earth at the so called “end of the world.” But the time referred to here does not, for the reasons already mentioned, seem to us to be the end of the world. The language is very similar to that used elsewhere to describe the divine greatness and glory. “He looketh upon the earth and it trembleth; he toucheth the hills and they smoke.” “At thy rebuke they (the mountains) fled, at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.”

12. **BOOKS**; imagery derived from human tribunals. The books contained the records of the conduct of those who were to be judged.—**BOOK OF LIFE**; i. e., of the *living*. It was the register of these in distinction from those that were dead. The purpose of this seems to be to verify the righteousness of the sentence that was passed upon the latter. It was to show that none of them have their names in the list of God’s people; hence, all who were not written in that book were cast into the lake of fire.

13. THE SEA. The ordinary way in which the ancients spoke of the universe was, as "the heavens and earth and the regions under the earth," or Hades. Sometimes, as in chap. v. 13, there was added the *sea*, especially when the place of the dead was referred to. They had no difficulty of conceiving of persons who died and were buried on the land as descending to the underworld or Hades; but it was different with those who were lost in the sea. They could have no burial in the earth, and hence, according to heathen notions, they could not reach that underworld, but were obliged to wander as ghosts one hundred years. Hence it became usual, when the object was to include *all* mankind, to speak of those who were in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and in the sea.

14. DEATH AND HADES; the underworld and its king. Compare 1 Cor. xv. 55; Rev. vi. 8.—THE SECOND DEATH, an expression the converse of that applied to the saints, the "*first* resurrection." Neither of them is so named as denoting the order of *time* in which they occur, but as denoting *rank* or *degree*. The first resurrection was the *highest* resurrection; so the second death was the lowest, most dreadful death. These lost souls had indeed been dead before their natural death; like those described by the apostle (1 Tim. v. 6), "dead while they live."

So end the prophetic visions of the overthrow and punishment of the enemies of the church. Glancing over the preceding fifteen chapters, we see them presenting a closely compacted narrative in two parts, the first relating the doom of persecuting Judaism, the second that of persecuting Rome, with brief supplemental mention of Gog and Magog, by which we understand the persecuting empire of the Turks. It greatly confirms us in this view that as an historic fact these three, and these alone among the nations, have in reality been the enemies of Christianity, who have wielded the arm of secular power to destroy it. We infer from the doom imposed upon Satan, as the great Instigator of persecution, that he will never be able to stir up this warfare again. This being the case, the task, proposed to himself by the apostle has been performed. The book so understood has a unity and consistency of plan worthy of the highest standards of literature. Most of the difficulties which upon any other view of it seem inexplicable disappear. The work appears worthy of its object, viz., to comfort the afflicted churches in the hour of their trial, and to strengthen them to bear that trial, by the certainty that the Saviour is holding them all the while safely in his hand, and will give them at last a glorious victory over all their enemies.

The two remaining chapters present an ideal

picture of the church in the latter-day glory, when the purposes of her Lord toward her are all fulfilled, and she stands in her perfected strength and beauty as the object of his eternal delight.

THE NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH.

In seeking to ascertain the meaning of these closing chapters, our first care, as it seems to us, should be to bring them into close relation with the declared purpose and scope of the book. If these chapters stood wholly alone, and we had no clew to their import but the words themselves, we might feel free to derive from them any meaning which those words, so gorgeous in their coloring, would warrant. But they do not stand alone; they are an integral part of a book professedly composed to show to Christ's servants the "things which must shortly come to pass." Nay, more, the same fact is reasserted of these two chapters specifically, "These sayings are faithful and true, and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must *shortly come to pass.*" (Verse 6.) We cannot resist the conclusion, then, that they fall within the same general design with the rest of the book, viz., to comfort and encourage the persecuted Christians by disclosing to them, not only the overthrow of their enemies, but the glorious rewards which should speedily be attained by those that were faithful under their sufferings.

Nor is it difficult to see in what way they would serve this purpose. It is known to all our readers that the great cathedral of Cologne, which has been seven centuries in building, was completed some five years since, and it is said from the original plans of Steinbach, the designer, which have recently been found after having been lost several hundred years. Now suppose when the work on this great structure was first begun, the workmen had become discouraged at the magnitude of the task and their own insufficient skill and resources. Suppose obstacles from without impeded their progress, and the doleful predictions of croakers reiterated in their ears that the task could never be completed. What then would have been the effect if through the telescope of time those discouraged men could have looked down the coming centuries, and seen rising in glorious perspective the magnificent cathedral as it stands to-day in finished and peerless beauty! How would their hearts have kindled with fresh zeal to labor for the completion of such a work! What new ideas would it give them of the skill of their master! What assurance that their labor would not be in vain, to know that the resources of nations would be expended upon it, and its completion should be crowned with the presence of one of the most renowned emperors of Europe!

Such a prophetic picture, it seems to us, of the church of God as she is to be in her ideal perfection, is sketched in this closing portion of the Revelation. It is, so to speak, the divine Architect's *plan of the edifice*. When John wrote, the church was small and weak. The power of the mightiest monarch in the world was arrayed against it. Its members were despised and ridiculed. All that prestige which has been gained by the growths and triumphs of eighteen centuries was as yet unknown. To human view nothing could be more discouraging than the prospect before Christianity at that time. Every maxim of worldly wisdom forbade men to sacrifice their lives for such a prospect; every dictate of prudence urged them not to join a cause so desperate. Who, then, can estimate the value to the church, in such a crisis, of this divine vision of what, in the plan and intent of her Lord, she was to be? Let us take, then, this leading idea of the passage, and see what light it sheds upon the text.

CHAPTER XXI. (1) And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. (2) And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. (3) And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God: (4) and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more;

Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away. (5) And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he saith, Write: for these words are faithful and true. (6) And he said unto me, They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. (7) He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. (8) But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part *shall be* in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

Eight centuries before this, Isaiah, the “evangelical prophet,” in his rapturous predictions of the Messiah’s times, had declared that the Lord would “create new heavens and a new earth,” in comparison with which the former should “not be remembered nor come into mind.” (Isa. lxxv. 17.) In that new world all tears should be wiped away (Isa. xxv. 8); there should be no more death, and no more sorrow nor crying (Isa. lxxv. 19). A glance at the connections of this prophecy shows that he was speaking of Christianity as the future light and glory of the earth. Says Mr. Barnes, “There can be no doubt, I think, that this refers to the times of the Messiah. It is adapted not only to comfort the ancient afflicted people of God, but it contains most important and cheering truth in regard to the final prevalence of true religion and *the state of the world when the gospel shall everywhere prevail.*”

Now John says he saw that "new heaven and new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away." What could he have meant by this, — what could the churches to whom he wrote have understood by it, but that which Isaiah had intended, and which was so familiar to the hearts and hopes of all devout men, the good time coming in the days of the triumph of the gospel? How wholly without warrant the idea that he meant a new material universe, or an earth new-cast in the molds of geologic fires. Just as, "if any *man* be in Christ he is a new creature; old things have passed away, and all things have become new" (2 Cor. v. 17), so with the world in which man lives. To us it seems no more inconsistent to assert a total physical change in the turning of a soul to Christ, than a like physical change in the earth in the grand regeneration which was to constitute its latter day glory (Matt. xix. 28).

The apostle adds, further, "There was no more sea." Only three verses before this he had spoken of the sea as one of the places, along with death and hell, which in the old earth had been receptacles for *the dead*. The reason for this is, doubtless, to be found in the fact that the ancients generally had the idea that the burial in the earth of a deceased person was necessary in order that his soul might enter into its rest in hades. Com-

pare Eccl. vi. 5, where having "no burial" is mentioned among the great calamities of human experience. Those lost in the sea could have no such burial, and of course must constitute a class of the dead by themselves. Therefore, in that new state of things, when death and hades were abolished (1 Cor. xv. 54; 2 Tim. i. 10), the sea also, in this sense, would be no more. It was a mode of speaking, accordant with the conceptions of those times, to describe, in the most impressive way possible, Christ's victory over the universe of evil.

But the "new earth," following out the analogy of the figure, must have a *capital*, a new Jerusalem,—not the old Canaanite city which David captured, and which had so long been the scene of changes and vicissitudes, of crimes and calamities innumerable,—but one of celestial origin, and therefore coming down from God out of heaven. This is the "Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. xii. 22), in other words, the whole assembly of God's redeemed people. It is a city beautiful in holiness, arrayed as a bride adorned for her husband. The personification of a city as a beautiful woman has been common in all nations; and in the Old Testament, especially, Jerusalem was repeatedly characterized as a bride, married to her Lord. See Ps. xlv.; Isa. lxii. 5; Jer. iii. 14, 20, etc.

Jerusalem, as containing the temple, was the dwelling-place of God. The very word *shekinah*, which denoted the luminous cloud appearing over the tabernacle and upon the mercy-seat of the ark signifies *habitation*. So the New Jerusalem, the church of God, will be his tabernacle among men, and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people, and God himself shall dwell with them and be their God, and shall fulfill all those promises as to the abolition of pain, and tears, and death, which he had uttered through the prophets.

Then follows a brief emphatic reassurance of the reality of all this in the majestic words proceeding from the Throne itself, "Behold, I make all things new!"—coupled with a command to the apostle to record what he had heard, because they were true and faithful.

The true reading of the sixth verse is doubtful. Some of the early manuscripts have, as in our version, "It is done!" meaning all that has been predicted is fulfilled—it is so certain that it may be spoken of as already accomplished. Others omit "I am," and make the next two words the subject of the verb, thus:—"And he said unto me, I have become the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end," etc. That is, because of my sufferings and exaltation I have been appointed the King and rewarder of both the righteous and the wicked; them who by their faith

and constancy overcame persecution, and those who yielded and joined the enemies of my church, — the cowardly, the unbelieving, the abominable (referring to those who polluted themselves with the abominations mentioned in Chap. xviii. 4), the murderers, etc., — who shall have their part with the Dragon, and the Beast, and all the forces and allies of evil, in the lake of fire. This last utterance carries us back to the doom pronounced upon these enemies in the preceding chapters, and shows that the subject still is as at the beginning of the book, the rewards of the martyrs, and the final overthrow and punishment of their enemies.

Such is a brief outline sketch of the glorious city of the saints, the New Jerusalem. But the subject is too inspiring to be left just there; so one of the angels is sent to show to the apostle more fully its wonderful attractions. This, with the appropriate closing words of warning, completes the book.

THE NEW JERUSALEM.

This passage is an amplification of Chap. xxi. 2-5, containing the same matter in a fuller and more expanded form. Its imagery and costume are intensely Jewish; so much so that it will be impossible to appreciate them without a very familiar knowledge of Jewish ideas, and especially of the structure and uses of the temple in Jerusalem.

This edifice, at the time the apostle wrote, was both the most magnificent and most holy building in the world. It is often called the *second* temple,—the first, built by Solomon, having been destroyed at the captivity, and a new one erected by Zerubbabel and the captives on their return from Babylon, Ezra iii. 8. With more propriety it should be called the *third*, having been almost wholly built anew by Herod the Great. This able, but tyrannical prince, who had become most obnoxious by his cruelties, sought to recover the favor of the nation by rebuilding and adorning Jerusalem and the temple. The latter was undertaken some twenty years before the birth of Christ, and after the death of Herod was continued by his successors, who carried out the plans of its founder, and made of it the richest and most beautiful structure then known. It was with reference to this work that the Jews said to Christ: “Forty and six years was this temple in building.” (John ii. 20.)

It was this temple, as it then stood before the destruction of Jerusalem, which evidently constituted the formative idea of the vision before us. To the Jewish thought, the temple was God’s EARTHLY DWELLING-PLACE. In it Jehovah abode among his people for a long time, giving visible tokens of his presence by the supernatural light which shone between the cherubim over the

sacred ark. That presence was at once the pledge of his protection, the assurance of all prosperity, and the source of the highest honor possible to fallen man. Nay, it is expressly declared that the arrangements and services of the sanctuary were "patterns of things in the heavens" (Heb. ix. 23); not in outward form, for the latter are spiritual only, but so appointed as to be impressive symbols of the truths pertaining to redemption and salvation. It may be added that the temple was, in the highest sense, Jerusalem. The surrounding city existed for it; its buildings were the abodes of those who served in the temple, or were in some way connected with its worship. Tyre and Sidon were cities of foreign commerce; Alexandria, of schools and learning; Damascus, of the arts; but Jerusalem, of religion. It was the holy city, the "city of the great King."

To a people, therefore, trained to such conceptions of the temple, nothing would convey so impressively the idea of the dignity, the holiness, the glory, and the blessedness of Christ's perfected church, as the representation of it under the figure of a *New Jerusalem*, i. e., a *New Temple*, coming down from God out of heaven to be the light and joy of the whole earth. Indeed, the precedent for such a representation had been set by Ezekiel, who, in his elaborate description of the temple of the latter days, had predicted the glory

and greatness of the church of the Messiah.
(Ezek. xl.-xlviii.)

CHAPTER XXI. (9) And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. (10) And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and shewed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: (11) her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal: (12) having a wall great and high; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: (13) on the east were three gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. (14) And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (15) And he that spake with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. (16) And the city lieth foursquare, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal. (17) And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, *according to* the measure of a man, that is, an angel. (18) And the building of the wall thereof was jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass. (19) The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; (20) the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. (21) And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the several gates was of one pearl: and

the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. (22) And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof. (23) And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof *is* the Lamb. (24) And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it. (25) And the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day (for there shall be no night there): (26) and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it: (27) and there shall in no wise enter into it any thing unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie: but only they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. CHAPTER XXII. (1) And he shewed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof. (2) And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve *manner of* fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (3) And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall do him service; (4) and they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* on their foreheads. (5) And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Imitating the vision of Ezekiel, the apostle was carried away in spirit to a great and high mountain, from which, as by Moses from the summit of Mount Pisgah, the entire holy land could be seen. There he was shown the new city, effulgent with divine glory, coming down from heaven to earth. How, in view of this feature of the

description, can it ever have been assumed that the city was the abode of the blessed *in* heaven?

In glancing over the details which follow, we note, first, the peculiar *form* of the city. "It lieth foursquare,—the length and the breadth and the hight of it are equal." In other words, it was an exact cube. This points us at once to the Holy of holies in the earthly temple. This was an apartment in cubical form, of the dimensions of twenty cubits each way. In Solomon's temple, as in the tabernacle which preceded it, it contained the ark of the covenant with the figures of the cherubim on its golden cover. These were lost at the time of the captivity, and in the later temples of Zerubbabel and Herod the apartment is believed to have been entirely empty. The Holy of holies was the special dwelling place,—the *Shekinah*, for that is the meaning of the word—of Jehovah. He was among men, yet apart from them. He was too holy for sinners to approach except through the mediation of the high-priest. The vail of the temple was the separation behind which no man except him might pass and live. But under the gospel of Christ all this is changed. The separating vail has been rent away, and all believers have now direct and free access to God himself. See the full exhibition of this subject in Heb. ix. and x., especially x. 19.

It is this great and blessed truth of Christianity which is shown in this form of the city. The New Jerusalem is not a city which has a Holy of holies *in* it, but is *itself* a Holy of holies. Hence the apostle says, "I saw no temple in it for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb *are* the temple of it." The Divine Presence is no longer shut away in inaccessible darkness, but fills the entire abode of the saints. They are, henceforth, dwellers in that sanctuary with Christ himself. They are all made priests unto God. Chaps. i. 6; v. 10; xx. 6; 1 Pet. ii. 5. Their nearness to the Lord is even greater than that which the high-priest enjoyed, who could enter the inner shrine but once a year. It is as if that apartment in the temple at Jerusalem were enlarged so as to take in all the city.

In harmony with this conception of the perfected church being a Holy of holies, its dimensions are made to correspond with the vast number of its members. It is 12,000 furlongs, or 1,500 miles in length, breadth and height. In an architectural point of view, such a temple-city would be most incongruous. The very description ought to show that the whole is symbol, and not a real city, whether on earth or in heaven, in which the righteous are to dwell. An actual city, with houses 1,500 miles high, is inconceivable; but as a symbol of the presence of God with his

people, and of their priestly dignity, purity and blessedness, it is both obvious and exceedingly impressive.

Like the temple at Jerusalem, this celestial city was surrounded by *a wall*, 144 cubits, about 216 feet, high. Why this was so disproportionate to the height of the city itself has been a great puzzle to commentators. The difficulty, as it seems to us, arises from the attempt to bring the whole into architectural symmetry as if an actual city was intended. But symbols do not come under this law. Their significance lies simply in the ideas they separately represent, not in their verisimilitude to any actually existing object. Witness the description of the four Living Ones (Chap. iv. 7); of the locusts (Chap. ix. 3-10); of the beast (Chap. xiii. 1), etc. Two hundred and sixteen feet was not far from the height of the temple wall at Jerusalem, measured from the deep valleys which surrounded it on all sides but the north. The idea seems to be simply that, except in the dimensions of the Holy of holies, this new sanctuary was *like the temple*.

Similar in design was the mention of the gates, three on each side, corresponding to those in the walls of Herod's edifice. Precisely how many there were of the latter is not certain, but their aggregate number was very nearly that here mentioned.

“The building of the wall,” i. e., the materials of which it was constructed, was of jasper, a stone of variegated colors, purple and red, and often striped with green or yellow. It rested on “twelve foundations,” i. e., not twelve layers one above another around the city, but twelve *sections*, each occupying the whole space between two adjacent gates. One of these was a single jasper stone, another a sapphire, a third a chalcedony, etc. The prevailing colors of these precious stones are supposed to have been as follows: jasper, variegated red; sapphire, sky blue; chalcedony, gray and pearly; emerald, green; sardonyx, white tinted with red; sardius, yellow variegated; chrysolite, transparent and golden; beryl, sea-green; topaz, wine-yellow; chrysoprasus, green and gold; jacinth (hyacinth), red; amethyst, purple.

These massive and costly foundations corresponded to the substructure of hewn stones which upheld the temple area, and many of which, of immense size, some of them above forty feet in length, are still visible in the walls at Jerusalem. Each was inscribed with the name of one of the apostles, signifying, probably, that Christ's church is built upon the teaching and testimony of these divinely ordained representatives of their Lord. So the gates, consisting each of a single pearl, bore the names of the twelve tribes of Israel;

the whole, — the foundations and the gates, — showing the unity of the church, the old and the new builded together into a single edifice. Compare Eph. ii. 19–22.

One of the most notable features of Herod's temple was the tessellated pavement of its courts, which was laid with blocks of marble and other stones of various colors. The corresponding item in the New Jerusalem is mentioned in verse 21. "The *street* (pavement) of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass," i. e., transparent gold, a symbolic representation combining the ideas of richness and spotless purity.

There was "no temple," or inclosed edifice containing the Holy of holies, the highest and most sacred portion of the sanctuary, for, as shown previously, the presence of God and the Lamb filled the whole structure, making it *all* a Holy of holies. This presence, corresponding to the bright light of the *Shekinah* (compare 1 Kings viii. 11; Ps. lxxx. 1; Zech. ii. 5), served instead of the sun and the moon to flood the whole with the effulgence of the divine glory.

The words "of them that are saved," in the twenty-fourth verse, are not found in the best manuscripts, leaving the passage to read, "and the nations," — or the Gentiles, the word nearly always having that signification, — "shall walk by means of its light," the idea being that the New

Jerusalem shall shed abroad its light upon all the nations of the earth, teaching them the knowledge of God and salvation. It is the same sentiment that is so beautifully expressed in Isa. lx. 1-3. In consequence of this illumination, the kings of the earth, converted to Christ, shall bring their honors and their wealth as a grateful tribute of praise to God, and to increase its power in diffusing the gospel to all mankind. Here we have again the same idea that is presented in Isa. lx. 6-16. This is one of the features of this magnificent description which seems to show us very clearly that the place of the New Jerusalem is not in heaven, but on earth; for how can the kings of the earth contribute to the glory and honor of heaven?

For this purpose, i. e., to furnish ever free access to the gospel and salvation, the gates of this temple-city shall stand ever open. So in Isa. lx. 11. This is in marked contrast with those of the ancient temple, which were carefully shut every evening. "There shall be no night there," i. e., no time when devout worshipers may not approach most freely to God. Nor shall they come merely to worship, but they shall bring from all nations offerings of gratitude and praise. Verse 26.

Just within the outer court, or "Court of the Gentiles," at Jerusalem, a stone balustrade four

and one-half feet high was built, surmounted at intervals by pillars, bearing inscriptions in different languages, warning all who were not Israelites, and all unclean persons, from passing that line on pain of death. This was called the *soreg*, and is alluded to by the apostle Paul in Eph. ii. 14, as the "middle wall of partition," which had under the old dispensation separated Jews and Gentiles. An instance of the extreme vigilance with which this barrier was guarded is seen in Acts xxi. 28, where for the supposed offense of bringing Greeks into the temple, the Jews were ready to murder Paul. So in the New Jerusalem, "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie,"—terms commonly used to denote those who practiced idolatry,—"but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life," i. e., true Israelites, the registered citizens of the Messiah's kingdom. This is a mode of saying, in consistency with the figure which is preserved throughout, that those only can enter the spiritual church of the Lord who have by regeneration and spiritual cleansing obtained a rightful title to do so. "The temple of the Lord is *holy*, which temple ye are." 1 Cor. iii. 17; 2 Cor. vi. 16.

The *water-supply* of the ancient temple was one of its most important characteristics. It is obvious that the rites performed in it,—the slaugh-

tering of the victims offered for sacrifice, and all the numberless lustrations prescribed in the various services, — would require a large amount of water for purposes of cleanliness even, as well as for ceremony. To supply this, Solomon built the great aqueduct, whose ruins still remain, together with the immense pools at Bethlehem, and in the valley west of Jerusalem. This aqueduct crossed the Tyropœon valley from Mt. Zion, and entered the temple area about midway on its western side, where the water was collected in a vast subterranean reservoir under the temple. The overflow, together with the sewage produced in the rites, which was conducted by conduits into receptacles beneath, flowed through a deep subterranean channel into the valley of Kidron on the east, and thence into the broader vale of Siloam on the southeast, where it was utilized in irrigating the extensive gardens planted there, which still, as in ancient times, supply fresh vegetables in great quantities and variety to the inhabitants of the city. There are numerous tacit allusions to this water-system in the Old Testament. Thus in Ps. xlv. 4, "There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High" (Isa. xii. 3). "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells (the subterranean cisterns) of salvation." This was an important feature in Ezekiel's vision of the mystical temple (Chap. xlvii. 1-12).

Carrying out, then, the parallel between the earthly temple and the spiritual temple, the church of the redeemed, the angel shows the apostle a similar stream of water proceeding from it. But as these comparisons are all from the less to the greater, from the inferior to the superior, the stream of the New Jerusalem, instead of being in part unclean, is a pure river of living water, never stagnant, ever flowing, clear as crystal, and "proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb," i. e., out from under the sanctuary where God dwelt (Chap. xxii. 1). "In the midst of the street of it" seems to denote the middle of the open court, where were cultivated, as in the courts of oriental houses at this day, flowers and ornamental shrubbery. "On either side of the river," refers of course to the stream after it had left the temple area, and begun its course down the valley. In both, the court and the valley, was cultivated the "tree of life"—probably a tacit allusion to the tree so called in the garden of Eden, access to which had been lost to the race by their sin. These trees, unlike common garden vegetation, had twelve fruitages, i. e., not so many kinds of fruit, but so many crops or seasons for bearing, one each month,—a figure denoting abundance,—and the leaves thereof were "for the healing of the nations." The import of this figure can scarcely be doubted,—the grace of

God conveyed through his church is for the refreshment and salvation of the world. The conception of the whole figure is very striking and exceedingly suggestive, though to one not thoroughly familiar with its local and Jewish features, not a little obscure.

Verse 3. "And there shall be no curse any more." The best conception of this clause may perhaps be obtained from the story of Achan and his sin, in Joshua vii. That sin was a "curse" in the camp of Israel, by reason of which God would not dwell with them till it was put away (Josh. vii. 12). To show, then, the safety and security of the perfected church, it is assured that no "curse" shall come into it; nothing to provoke the divine displeasure, or prevent his perpetual dwelling among them. Instead of that, God's own throne shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him, and shall see his face, — denoting free and open communion with him, — and his name shall be in their foreheads, as it was upon the frontlet of the high-priest when he went into the Holy of holies. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, like the seven-branched lamps of the golden candlestick, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign, — enjoy kingly dignity and honor — forever.

Such is the glorious picture with which the

exiled apostle concludes his prophetic message to the seven churches of what was about to come to pass. After long study of it, we can only repeat what we have said before, that it seems to us to be an ideal sketch of the church of God in its highest and most perfect state; that which is marked out for her in the plans of her Founder, and which she is one day to attain on earth. And because no terms known to John or his readers in that age would have been sufficient for the description in plain prosaic verity, the *phraseology* was derived from what was the most sacred and glorious object known to them, the temple at Jerusalem. Not that the church was to be literally a building, or a city, or a beautiful woman, the bride of Christ, but that these objects, all centering in Jerusalem and the temple, so dear to all pious hearts, were *sources of language* with which to set forth in the most lively manner what, literally, would have been inconceivable.

Suppose the little band of the Pilgrims in that first terrible winter at Plymouth, when one-half their number perished from cold and disease, and were buried on Cole's Hill, their graves being carefully smoothed down to conceal their fate from the Indians, had, to cheer their despondency and nerve them to new fortitude, received, through angelic revelation to their beloved Elder Brewster, a vision of what the nation they were found-

ing would be in 1885, — more than twenty-six decades from that time. No *literal* terms would have been sufficient for the description. Republic, States, Union, Congress, President, — much more, railroads, telegraphs, coal, petroleum, cotton, the press, and many others, would have been words without meaning. Even figures would have been to their view as absurd as a city 1,500 miles high, — three and a half millions of square miles of territory, fifty millions of people, an annual bread crop of 2,500 millions of bushels, a national debt of 2,500 millions of dollars, etc., etc. Instead of this, let the language have been derived from some object known and dear to them in the beloved England from which they were exiled, Let the great city London, the palace of St. James, Westminster Hall, the renowned seat of justice, the venerable Abbey where her kings were entombed, the universities where their divines had studied, and the like, all have been laid under contribution to furnish ideals for the magnificent vision. Then let these have been grouped with the skill of a divine artist, and let it be named a “*New England*,” and there might have been thus conveyed to the minds of the poor exiles some conceptions of the National Edifice God was about to build, and the foundations of which they were laying in their sufferings and tears. How bright the vision ! How blessed the comfort ! So Dwight,

in the dark days immediately succeeding the Revolution, sang his song of his country. We quote imperfectly from memory, —

“As down a lone valley with cedars o’erspread,
From war’s dread confusion I pensively strayed,
The clouds from the face of the sky had retired,
The winds ceased to murmur, the thunders expired;
Perfumes as of Eden flowed sweetly along,
And a voice as of angels enchantingly sung,
‘Columbia! Columbia! to glory arise,
THE QUEEN OF THE WORLD, and the CHILD OF THE
SKIES!’”

V.

THE CONCLUSION.

THE closing portion of this book is exceedingly impressive, as is suitable to a message of such grandeur and solemnity. The Revelation of the Lord's purpose toward his suffering saints, for their own consolation and that of their brethren who, in the dark days that are to come, filling up two and a half centuries, are to experience the hostility of his and their Adversary, is finished. A ground of confidence and hope under those sufferings is laid for them of the most assuring character. It remains that it shall be attested to them by the strongest possible evidences of divine authority, that it may be held sacredly inviolable under the guaranty of the highest sanctions. The person who speaks is still the angel, who throughout represents the Lord himself, and speaks in his name.

CHAPTER XXII. (6) And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass.

A formal declaration, repeated from that given in the beginning, that the utterances embraced in it are faithful, i.e., will be faithfully and certainly

fulfilled, and true ; and that they have been communicated by the Lord, who was the God of the spirits (for so it is in the original) of the holy prophets, that have ever been employed to reveal his word, in order to show to his people the things which should shortly take place. That is, they should shortly *begin* to take place. The word does not shut us down to a single moment, as on the other hand it does not allow a long postponement of the execution. The events should enter upon an immediate *process of fulfillment*, occupying only just so much time as the fulfillment, in its nature, should make necessary. Here again, as in the outset, is a repeated declaration expressly forbidding such interpretations as refer the leading matters contained in it to periods yet far in the future.

CHAPTER XXII. (7) And behold I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.

Then the Lord himself speaks — or perhaps the angel who had been the medium of the revelation speaks, by delegated authority, in his name, “Behold, I come quickly,” a repetition in another form of the speediness of the fulfillment. Of course, this does not mean a visible, bodily approach, in the clouds of heaven, but a manifestation of his presence and power in the *performance* of what had been promised. It is just such a coming as has taken place at innumerable times

in the progress of the Messiah's kingdom, and such as the church daily seeks in asking for Christ's gracious interpositions in providence and by the Holy Spirit in carrying forward that kingdom. To insist that his coming must be a physical and visible one is to make the fulfillment of the Revelation, in the times and ways expressly in its own terms assigned for it, impossible.

CHAPTER XXII. (8) And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. (9) And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them which keep the words of this book: worship God.

The apostle in these verses gives assurance to the churches of the authenticity of the message. "It is I, John, who saw and heard these things." As much as to say, "It is your own spiritual father and shepherd, the apostle who lived and labored with you so many years, and whom you all know so well, that writes thus, and he writes what he himself saw and heard." Nay, more, he tells them in what manner he received the message. "I was so impressed by it that I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel, and should have done so had he not forbidden it, saying that he was not the Lord, but a fellow-servant like myself, and like the prophets and all who obeyed God's word." Such an assur-

ance that the message actually came from *him*, and that it had impressed *him* so deeply, would go far to induce the churches to accept it as genuine, and worthy of the profoundest reverence.

CHAPTER XXII. (10) And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand. (11) He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still. (12) Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is. (13) I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. (14) Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. (15) Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie.

(16) I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.

(17) And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.

(18) I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: (19) and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.

What now shall be done with the book itself? In the similar prophecies of Daniel, which had chief reference to the *distant* future, the prophet was

directed not to publish the message, but to shut or seal it up, for it was "for many days" (Chap. viii. 26). It was not a matter of immediate practical moment to the Jewish people at that time, when they were exiles in Babylon; it was designed for consolation to those who should live at the period of fulfillment, under Antiochus and other oppressors, some hundreds of years later. Even when Daniel himself sought more particular information about the meaning he was told, "Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." No practical benefit would result from proclaiming it; "the wicked would still do wickedly, and would not understand the meaning" (Chap. xii. 9, 10). In respect to the Revelation, however, the case was different; the time was "at hand" (verse 10), therefore let it not be closed up. The Lamb had opened the book of God's purposes (Chap. v. 5), and let it remain open. Its consolations were needed for *present* exigencies, under the present and immediately following sufferings of God's people.

And if it were urged in reply that the sealing of the book might possibly leave the way open for the oppressors, whose doom was so fearfully pronounced in it, to cease their persecutions and repent, as space was left under Daniel's prophecies, the angel replies, "No! Too late! God's

forbearance is exhausted! The unjust persecutor of the innocent, let him go on in his chosen career! The filthy idolater, let him practice his uncleanness still! So, too, let the upright and the pure remain unchanged. The Lord says, ‘I come immediately, with my rewards for all, to give to every one according as his deeds shall be.’” Compare Christ’s similar prediction when he was still in the flesh (Matt. xvi. 27, 28). Thus read in its connection, it is very apparent that this verse has no reference, as is often supposed, to the fixity of character in the future state. That fixity is no doubt an awful reality, but it is not *the* truth which is affirmed here.

Then further assurances and exhortations follow. He who utters these woes and these promises is the Alpha and the Omega, whose being and kingdom are eternal. Blessed are his people who are preparing themselves for citizenship in the New Jerusalem. The best MSS., instead of the words, “that do his commandments” (verse 14), read “who are washing their robes,” an expression more fully setting forth the idea of purity received from the blood of Christ than of obedience — that is of salvation by *grace* rather than *works*, and so better contrasting with the impurity which is kept without, the dogs, the sorcerers, etc.

Once more, then, an attestation even higher than John’s. The Lord speaks in person. “I,

JESUS, have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the churches. You know who I am — looking backward, the promised Royal Son of David; looking forward, the bright Star of the morning, that ushers in the glorious day.”

Then bursts forth the glad response! The kindled and rapt spirit of the prophet, and the churches whom Christ has made his Bride, unite in the joyous cry, “Come, Lord, be it as thou hast promised! And let those outside the church, every one that hears her shout of welcome, echo it back, ‘Come’! Nay, if there be in all the world one soul that thirsts for an interest in the promises of the Lord, and is willing to accept his offers, let him come and drink of the water of life without money or cost!”

The message is now completed, and nought remains but to put upon it the stamp of inviolability. It is GOD’S REVELATION; let not man dare to touch it, either by adding to or taking away from it! Upon the former shall be laid all the curses it contains; from the latter shall be taken all its promises! Dread words! was ever writing or volume in human speech so accredited to man as this!

CHAPTER XXII. (20) He which testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus.

And yet even once more the Divine Voice echoes through the closing portals of heaven,

affirming the speediness of the fulfillment, to meet the joyous response of the apostle, "Amen!"

The apostolic benediction follows:

CHAPTER XXII. (21) The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen.

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